

SAGES Patient Partner Financial Incentive Plan (FIP)

Purpose

To ensure patients, patient allies, and advocates contributing to the SAGES Patient Partner Network (PPN) are recognized and compensated fairly when their contributions exceed the scope of casual, volunteer participation. The FIP serves as a guideline and provides recommendations to those committees or groups that utilize the PPN as part of their work.

Principles

- **Equity** – Patients do not derive the same career benefits as surgeons from participation in professional societies; therefore, compensation acknowledges the value of their lived experiences.
- **Transparency** – Clear thresholds and rates are provided so patients and committees know expectations upfront.
- **Flexibility** – Recognizes different levels of engagement (episodic vs. sustained, individual vs. group).
- **Alignment** – Benchmarked against other organizations' patient/public involvement policies (e.g., NIHR).

Compensation Framework

Patient Partners will be engaged as consultants for activities requiring significant time or expertise. Compensation is determined by the type and intensity of work, using a sliding scale:

Level of Engagement	Examples	Estimated Time	Compensation (per activity unless otherwise specified)
Level 1: Light / Episodic (Volunteer)	Surveys, brief email feedback, single phone call, ≤30 min review of document	<1 hr	Volunteer (no payment)
Level 2: Limited Involvement	One-time document review (1–2 hrs), short virtual focus group, brief consult on guideline section	1–2 hrs	\$50–\$100
Level 3: Moderate Involvement	Participation in half-day focus group, multiple document reviews with	2–5 hrs	\$150–\$250

	feedback, virtual consensus panel		
Level 4: Sustained Involvement	Serving as standing member of a guideline panel, recurring research grant reviews, multi-session advisory role	5–10 hrs over weeks	\$300–\$500 (per activity, per year; subject to change given longevity of involvement)
Level 5: High / Strategic Role	Keynote or educational speaker at Annual Meeting, co-design leader on patient materials, major co-author on grant/guideline	10+ hrs / travel commitment	\$500–\$1,000 (plus travel reimbursement)

Operational Notes

- **Payment Method:** Honoraria processed through SAGES or grant awards as consultant fees.
- **Accounting of Time:** Time commitments listed for each level of engagement represent a reasonable estimate of the effort required to complete the task. These estimates are intended as guidelines rather than strict measures. Actual time may vary depending on the nature of the project and the individual's pace. Committees and patient partners should use these estimates as a framework to set expectations and determine appropriate compensation.
- **Threshold:** Compensation triggered when expected involvement exceeds 1 hour of active contribution.
- **Group Activities:** Focus groups compensated per patient at Level 2–3, depending on duration.
- **Travel & Lodging:** Covered separately for in-person invited speakers at the Annual Meeting.
- **Diversity Commitment:** PETF will ensure fair distribution of compensated opportunities to avoid overburdening a small number of patient partners.

Review & Adjustments

Pilot Year (2025–26): Collect feedback from patients and SAGES committees.

Annual Review: PETF will reassess rates, thresholds, and budget at a minimum every 3 years based on usage and patient feedback.

References

- National Institute for Health and Care Research. (n.d.). Payment guidance for researchers and professionals. NIHR. Retrieved September 17, 2025, from <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392>
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