

Participant Support on Sponsored Programs

1. Overview

Participant support is allowable as a direct cost when the sponsor (federal or non-federal agency) funds a project aimed at supporting outreach programs. These programs aim to bring experts together to discuss research, education findings, or to expose other researchers or students to new research and education techniques. Funding provided by the sponsor may include those categories of expenses

2. Purpose

Participant support costs are those direct costs paid to (or on behalf of) participants or trainees (not employees) for participation in meetings, conferences, symposia, workshops, and/or other training projects when there is a category for participant support costs in the award.

3. Who Must Comply

Department Personnel
Research Financial Services
Principal Investigators

4. Guidelines for Participant Support

Proposal Preparation

- Inclusion of Participant Costs requires a detailed budget justification
- Identified specifically on National Science Foundation (NSF) awards
- Other agencies may use another cost category, such as stipends
- Amounts allocated in the participant support cost budget category of federal awards are excluded from the Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) base
- Please refer to the following matrix to determine if Research Assistant vs Participant Support vs Research Subject Payment

Participant support costs may include the following expenses:

- Tuition and registration fees if required to participate in the project
- Event registration fees
- Supplies and manuals – only those directly attributable to individual participants
- Stipends – predetermined amount for housing and subsistence allowance
- Travel costs – sole purpose of the trip is to participate in the project activity

Supplies and manuals – only those directly attributable to individual participants. The following expenses, except when specifically allowed by the award, should not be processed as participant support costs:

- Event support cost facility rentals, media equipment rentals food/refreshments) not made on behalf or paid to participants
- Travel for project PI or staff
- Entertainment/food for non-participants
- Honoraria paid to guest speaker or lecturer
- Incentive payment to encourage an individual to participate as a research subject

- Payments to a participant's employer for reimbursement for the costs relating to sending the employee to the project event
- Travel for a consultant who is providing service to the university

Re-budgeting

- Re-budgeting from the participant support cost category into other categories without prior sponsor approval is not allowed.
- The [NSF Award and Administration Guide](#) states that "funds provided for participant support may not be used by grantees for other categories of expense without the specific prior written approval of the cognizant NSF Program Office"
- Unexpended participant support costs are reported as unspent funds on the award

Stipends or Subsistence Allowances

To help defray the costs of personal maintenance while participating in a conference or training activity, participants may be paid a stipend, per diem or subsistence allowance, based on the type and duration of the activity, as outlined in the pertinent program solicitation and in the grant.

- Such allowances must be reasonable, in conformance with the policy of the grantee organization
- Limited to the days of attendance at the conference, plus the actual travel time required to reach the conference location by the most direct route available

Travel Allowances

- Travel costs of participants may be allowable as outlined in the pertinent program solicitation and in the grant.
- In training activities that involve field trips, costs of transportation of participants are allowable.
- Where meals or lodgings are furnished without charge or at a nominal cost (e.g., as part of the registration fee), the per diem or subsistence allowance will be correspondingly reduced.
- Although local participants may participate in conference meals and coffee breaks as provided for in AAG Chapter V.C.5, http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/aag_5.jsp#VC5, grant funds may not be used to pay per diem or similar expenses for local participants in the conference.

PI Responsibility

The PI and his/her project staff should be familiar with the specific requirements set forth by the sponsor and are expected to ensure compliance with those requirements. In addition to the financial restrictions noted above, the PI/department is also required to retain records detailing:

- Criteria by which participants in the program are selected
- Copies of applications of selected participants, including documentation as to how they meet the selection criteria
- List of program participants and documentation of their participation in the program

5. Resources

Related Policies

Allowable Costs on Sponsored Programs
Cost Transfers on Sponsored Programs
Human Subject Payments on Sponsored Programs

Sponsor Policies

NIH Grants Policy Statement 7.9.1 Select Items of Cost Pre-Award (Pre-Agreement) Costs)
NSF Grants Policy Manual Chapter VI – Allowability of Costs 602.2 Pre-Award Costs
NASA Uniform Guidance Supplement 1800.209 Pre-award costs

Federal Regulations

Uniform Guidance 200.403 Factors affecting allowability of costs

Uniform Guidance 200.405 Allocable costs

Uniform Guidance 200.458 Pre-award costs