

Participant Support Costs



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Some extramural sponsors include a category in their budget forms called “participant support costs.” Participant support is provided by several Federal agencies and other sponsors and is defined in the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200). Each agency has discretion in how it defines participant support costs.

Historically, the National Science Foundation (NSF) had the most restrictive policies governing the budgeting, expending, and reporting of these funds. The definition in 2 CFR 200 closely follows NSF’s definition of participant support. Participant support is defined in [2 CFR 200.1](#) as “...direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with conferences, or training projects.”

Under CSU’s negotiated F&A rate agreement, participant support costs are excluded from the F&A base calculation. However, when the F&A rate type is Total Direct Cost (TDC), participant support is not excluded from the base calculation. In such cases, it’s always beneficial to discuss with your OSP research administrator, who can provide the necessary guidance.

Please note: Human subject incentive payments and graduate student support/tuition are commonly misidentified as participant support in budget forms. These costs do not meet the definition of participant support.

When the sponsor requires CSU to track and manage participant support activity separately, a separate Child “53” Account is created and coded to not incur indirect costs.

When a sponsor restricts the participant support budget category, the budget may not be re-allocated to other categories without agency review and approval. For example, NSF has a specific request and review process for the reallocation. Sponsor requirements regarding participant support should be clearly identified in the award’s terms and conditions or policy guidance.

Any unexpended balance left in a participant support Child “53” account at the end of the project period will become a de-obligated balance and will not be used to offset expenses in the Parent “53” account and/or other related Child “53” accounts.

Relevant Resources:

- Refer to the current [NSF PAPPG](#) for Participant Support budget and award administration guidance.