# **Participant Support Guidelines**

The Office of Sponsored Programs frequently receives questions regarding Participant Support (Line F on the Proposal Budget). This document aims to answer some commonly asked questions.

You can find more details regarding Participant Support in the [National Science Foundation Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG).](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg22_1/pappg_2.jsp#IIC2e)

The participant support budget category refers to 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 NSF-sponsored conferences or training projects. Any additional categories of participant support costs other than those described in 2 CFR § 200.75 (such as incentives, gifts, souvenirs, t-shirts and memorabilia), must be justified in the budget justification, and such costs will be closely scrutinized by NSF. (See [Chapter II.E.9](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg22_1/pappg_2.jsp#IIE)).

Speakers and trainers generally are not considered participants and should not be included in this section of the budget. However, if the primary purpose of the individual’s attendance at the conference is learning and receiving training as a participant, then the costs may be included under participant support. If the primary purpose is to speak or assist with management of the conference, then such costs should be budgeted in appropriate categories other than participant support.

For some educational projects conducted at local school districts, the participants being trained are employees. In such cases, the costs must be classified as participant support if payment is made through a stipend or training allowance method. The school district must have an accounting mechanism in place (i.e., sub-account code) to differentiate between regular salary and stipend payments.

To help defray the costs of participating in a conference or training activity, funds may be proposed for payment of stipends, per diem or subsistence allowances, based on the type and duration of the activity. Such allowances must be reasonable, in conformance with the policy of the proposing organization and limited to the days of attendance at the conference plus the actual travel time required to reach the conference location. 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 should be correspondingly reduced. Although local participants may participate in conference meals and coffee breaks, funds may not be proposed to pay per diem or similar expenses for local participants in the conference. Costs related to an NSF-sponsored conference (e.g., venue rental fees, catering costs, supplies, etc.) that will be secured through a service agreement/contract should be budgeted on line G.6., "Other Direct Costs" to ensure appropriate allocation of indirect costs.

Funds may be requested for the travel costs of participants. If so, the restrictions regarding class of accommodations and use of U.S.-Flag air carriers are applicable. In training activities that involve field trips, costs of transportation of participants are allowable. The number of participants to be supported must be entered in the parentheses on the proposal budget. Participant support costs must be specified, itemized and justified in the budget justification section of the proposal. Indirect costs (F&A) are not usually allowed on participant support costs unless the grantee’s current, federally approved indirect cost rate agreement provides for allocation of F&A to participant support costs. Participant support costs must be accounted for separately should an award be made.

The table below provides information about various costs and whether they can be included in the Participant Support costs section (Line F) of the NSF budget.

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| **Cost(s)** | **Include in Participant Support line of budget** |
| Conference Speaker fees | No. Speakers and trainers are not considered participants and should not be included on the participant support line of the budget.  |
| Honorariums | No. Honorarium costs are not considered participant costs and should not be included on the participant support line of the budget.  |
| Human subject payments for participation in research | No. Payments to human subjects should be included on line G6 of the NSF budget under “Other Direct Costs” |
| Individual attending a conference for learning or training | Yes. The costs may be included under participant support. |
| Costs related to an NSF-sponsored conference (e.g., venue rental fees, catering costs, supplies, etc.) that will be secured through a service agreement/contract | No. When secured through a service contract, these costs should be budgeted on line G.6., “Other Direct Costs.” |
| Student employees | Students cannot be compensated partially as an employee and as a participant on the same grant. A determination must be made about whether the student should be an employee or a participant based upon the role of the student in the project. Student employees are compensated for services rendered and their level of compensation is tied to the number of hours worked. Participant support costs should be used to defray the costs of students participating in a conference or training activity related to the proposal. |
| Students included as part of a Research Experiences for Undergraduate Research (REU) proposal  | Yes. The REU program is aimed at developing the students’ research skills and providing a high-quality mentoring experience. Based on this role, an REU student is considered a participant in a training activity and funds for their support should be included as a stipend in the participant support cost section of the budget.  |

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| Resources: |
| [National Science Foundation Proposal & Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG),](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg22_1/pappg_2.jsp#IIC2gv) NSF 22-1 - effective October 4, 2021 |
| Article: National Science Foundation, Participant Support Costs Explained (no longer in circulation) |