

# Series 504 Compensation of Research Participants | Institutional Review Board

## The Institutional Review Board from Series 504 of Compensation of Research Participants

### I. Compensation

Compensation is any item of value given to research participants in consideration for their participation in research. Compensation is closely tied to the requirements in SOP 501 regarding recruitment, as it can impact equitable selection of subjects and the requirement that decisions regarding participation not be subject to undue influence. Compensation can never be a benefit to participation. While benefits may, from time to time, be items of value given to research participants, benefits are not intended to remunerate research participants for their participation. They are simply byproducts of participation.

### II. General Compensation Requirements

Compensation must:

1. Be sufficiently determined prior to the protocol review process, so that the IRB member reviewer can find and render the appropriate determinations relevant to the recruitment and informed consent processes.
2. Appropriately value participants' time and effort, while not being so high as to present undue influence. Appropriate value comes into play particularly in many online settings, like Amazon Mechanical Turk or research participant panels, where many prospective participants are looking for ways to participate as a means of earning additional income. Generally speaking, compensation should be roughly valued at the minimum wage, though utilization of a living wage index is certainly encouraged.
3. Be disclosed to research participants, while not also being the main point of emphasis in communications with participants, with reasonable certainty.
4. Be equivalent for similarly situated time, effort, and participant characteristics across the life cycle of the project.
5. Be rendered to research participants in a timely manner relative to their study participation.
6. Wherever possible, compensation should be tied to assessment completion rather than intervention procedures.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to ensure that participant compensation is being actively managed, and distributed appropriately. The Principal Investigator should frequently check in on compensation distributions to ensure that participants are being compensated fairly and timely, especially if they have delegated the task of compensating participants to another member of the research team.

### III. Payments to Children & Individuals with Legally Authorized Representatives

Children are frequently targeted as a participant population in research at Utah State University. Many times, compensation to children takes the form of a toy, educational materials, or edible rewards. Researchers should take great care to disclose these to parents or guardians in advance, so that any compensatory items deemed inappropriate by the parents can be negotiated or adjusted (e.g. food allergy, restrictions on collecting funds, etc.).

When payments are in the form of monetary value, the compensation may be delivered either to the parents/guardians or to the children themselves, depending on the type, amount, and circumstances of delivery. Parents or guardians should always be aware that compensation is being delivered directly to the children, when that is the case, and should have

an opportunity to collect the compensation in another manner, as parents and guardians are the people who have legal control over the finances of minor children in nearly all cases.

Researchers delivering compensation to individuals with legally authorized representatives (LARs) should coordinate with the LAR to determine the appropriate delivery mechanism of any previously-specified compensation. This includes ensuring that the participant themselves does or does not have the ability to manage their own finances, regardless of who has the ability to render legally effective informed consent for research participation.

#### **IV. Extra Credit as Compensation**

When extra credit or other points-based mechanisms are proposed as a compensation mechanism, the research project shall have an additional way for people who do not wish to participate to obtain the same amount of extra credit, points, etc. That additional way shall not be related to research participation in any manner, and the activity shall be substantially similar in terms of time and effort than that which will earn research participants the extra credit points (or equivalent).

#### **V. IRS Documentation & Collection of Identifying Information**

All state, federal, jurisdictional, and institutional requirements regarding the records maintained for compensation must be adhered to, and must be represented in the protocol submission. It is not appropriate to state that no identifiers will be collected for any protocol that carries monetary compensation, unless the funds are coming from the researchers personally.

The USU Controller's Office maintains policies and procedures for Utah State University funds and how those can be used to render payment to research participants. Most studies at USU are approved with the expectation that research participants' identities be kept confidential.