

EXCITE Implementation Phase - Use of Incentives

What are incentives?

Defined as “Cash or cash value items (i.e., gift cards) provided to individuals to incentivize behavior.”*

USDA-NIFA position:

“For nearly all NIFA programs, incentive payments are unallowable as they do not benefit the award.”* This applies to the payments made to participants as enticements to participate in activities such as surveys, program attendance, focus groups, interviews, listening groups, and/or to change behavior, such as getting vaccinated.

When is an incentive allowed?

Payments to participants that *lower barriers to their participation* by defraying expenses incurred to participate, for example, travel, are allowable as participant support costs.

If you are building the use of gift cards into your program, you must receive prior approval from your institution. Each institution is unique, and some may not allow the use of gift cards, even if it is an allowable cost for the award.

EXAMPLE 1: Participants are to play a game. The game includes educational components on adult immunizations. An incentive is to be given to the winner of the game.

Is this an allowable cost? No, this is not an allowable cost. Did winning the game lower the barrier to participation? No, it did not.

EXAMPLE 2: Participants must travel 100 miles to attend an educational event about adult immunizations. Your program would like to give the participant a gas card to compensate for traveling to the event.

Is this an allowable cost? Yes, giving the participants a gas card lowers their barrier to participating in the event.

EXAMPLE 3: You are hosting an educational event about adult immunizations and would like to provide childcare as an incentive for participants to attend.

Is this an allowable cost? Yes, this is an allowable cost. However, this would not be considered an incentive. A certified professional child care provider must be identified and subcontracted with for this effort. This budget item needs to be placed in the Other Direct Costs section.