

Modernizing Research Participant Payments: Aligning Policy with Today's Research Realities

Research Support Fund (RSF) investments supported a full review and revision of Brock's research participant payment guidelines, ensuring institutional policy reflects how research is conducted today rather than how it was conducted a decade ago.

Brock's existing participant payment guidelines had been built around a pre-pandemic model of research: largely in-person, with participants recruited locally and paid on-site through familiar, physical payment methods. The realities of research have since shifted substantially. Studies now routinely recruit participants from across the country and beyond, data collection frequently happens online, and participants increasingly expect, and in many cases require, remote, non-cash payment options rather than an in-person exchange. The old framework simply did not account for this, creating friction for researchers trying to run modern studies within an outdated administrative structure.

To close that gap, Office of Research Services led a comprehensive consultation and revision process, working closely with researchers, the Office of Research Ethics, and central Finance to rebuild the guidelines. This cross-functional approach ensured the revised guidelines would work in practice: ethically sound, financially accountable, and genuinely usable by researchers running studies with geographically dispersed, often fully remote participant pools. Alongside the guidelines themselves, the full suite of supporting documentation and templates was reviewed and updated to match, giving researchers a coherent, streamlined set of tools rather than a patchwork of policies and forms that no longer spoke to one another.

The result is a participant payment framework grounded in current research realities rather than legacy assumptions - one that reduces administrative friction for researchers, closes compliance gaps introduced by remote and online payment methods, and strengthens financial accountability across the institution. This work directly supports RSF's Management & Administration objectives: continued optimization of research administrative processes, implementation of initiatives that improve efficiency and accountability, and sustained investment in the core services that let Brock's research services staff support researchers through every stage of the grant lifecycle.

By closing the distance between policy and practice, this revision strengthens the backbone of research administration at Brock - reducing delays and rework for researchers, and reinforcing the accountability and efficiency RSF funding is intended to build.