



Travel costs are expenses incurred by entity employees who are in travel status on official business related to their awarded grant. Costs, which include transportation, lodging, and subsistence, must comply with the established federal travel policy or the subrecipient's established written travel policy, whichever is more restrictive. Subrecipients are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses as a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

## **Do we need a travel policy?**

Yes. Policies and procedures ensure travel funds are used in a fiscally responsible manner to gain the maximum benefit from those funds. Establishing a system of authorization, expenditure advances, and methods of reimbursement within your travel policy ensures expenditures meet all allowable standards including, but not limited to, federal and state funding laws and regulations.

All travel should be approved, prior to its execution, by an authorized supervisor or representative of the entity or be part of an established expense reimbursement plan. This policy should also include pre-approvals and authorizations for executive level personnel.

The travel approval requirements should define what is considered "travel status". All travel authorization must specify the purpose of the trip, travel dates, relation to the program, and budgeted amounts. Establish procedures for how travel costs will be determined (for example, per diem, actuals, etc.).

## **What are the essential elements of an effective travel policy?**

- Define Travel Status
- Air travel
- Conference registration
- Forms with instructions
- Ground transportation
  - Carpools
- Public transportation (bus, train, Uber and/or Lyft)
  - Parking expenses
- Local travel
- Lodging
- Per diem
- Privately-owned vehicle mileage reimbursement
- Sponsoring organization reimbursements
- Travel advances
- Travel authorization
- Traveler's responsibilities
  - Out-of-town travel
  - Overnight travel
  - Out-of-state travel
- Travel expense report

## What do we need to know about allowable travel costs?

Allowable travel costs are based on information found in NCA guidance documents, the DOJ Grant Financial Guide [2 CFR 200.475](#) and the [Federal Travel Regulations \(FTR\)](#). The various resources are continually updated, so it's a good idea to have someone from your organization check to confirm prior to securing travel arrangements. As such, the following guidance does not cover all potentially unallowable travel expenses.

Per Diem Rates for lodging and mileage can be found at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/>. Please note, rates are reviewed and updated throughout the year, thus it is advisable to check this site before confirming travel arrangements.

NCA also considers the following criteria key elements in determining whether or not travel charges are allowable:

- The travel is approved in the grant budget.
- The grantee must attend the training or other approved event to be reimbursed. This means that the training expenses should be included in the report following the training.
- The travel is necessary to fulfill the objectives/activities of the project and it directly benefits the project being charged, and
- The cost for travel is reasonable and represents prudent use of the federal funds.

## Dates, Destination, and Purpose

Travel dates must be limited to the period of the meeting. If a participant finds it necessary to arrive at the meeting location the night before the meeting, reimbursement will be permitted for expenses related to that evening's accommodation. Similarly, if an evening session commences a meeting, expenses will be reimbursed for travel that day.

## Personal Travel

Travel costs will only be reimbursed for business-related travel. Individuals combining personal and business travel are responsible for the difference in ticket price. Documentation must be provided to show the cost of the business travel on the same date that the airfare was booked. Airfares change daily so support for the business travel portion will not be accepted after the fact. Submit actual cost of the airfare and support for what the business portion would have cost at the time the airfare was booked (print out a copy of the information from the airline/train website or other travel website). Reimbursement will be limited to the lower rate.

## **Sponsored travel for non-employees of the grant funded organization (e.g. MDT partners, consultants)**

All non-employee travel must be approved in the grant budget and by the grantee organization in advance of the travel. It is strongly recommended that all travel expenses be coordinated, booked and paid directly by the grantee organization or, in the alternative, reimbursed to the individual traveling. Grantees that requested funding for non-employee travel should have a procedure in place to allow non-employees to request approval that includes payment requirements. Grantees are responsible for ensuring that the non-employee understands and follows all Federal, NCA and grantee organization travel guidance. Grantees should NOT be reimbursing other organizations (CAC, police department, local social services, etc.) for non-employee travel.

For consultants, travel expenses should be part of the consulting agreement – either listed separately in an itemized budget accompanying the consulting agreement or included as part of the fee for service or fee per hour rate in the consulting agreement.

If your agency has its own travel policy, it must address non-employee travel.

## **Guests**

Travel expenses, as specified in these guidelines, are reimbursable for the authorized traveler only. When hotel room costs differ for single or double occupancy, single room costs are approved; additional expense for double occupancy is the responsibility of the authorized traveler. When hotel room costs are the same for single or double occupancy, there is no additional cost to the individual accompanied by the spouse or guest.

## **Transportation**

Grant-funded travel must be conducted using the most expeditious mode and route practicable. The most advantageous transportation mode by order of precedence is common carrier (air, train, or bus) and rental car. The use of a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) can only be considered after the advantage of using the other modes of transportation is evaluated. People traveling to locations within four hours' drive time are generally expected to travel by automobile.

### *Mileage Reimbursement (Privately Owned Vehicle)*

If travel by a POV is selected when it is not the most expeditious mode and route practicable, reimbursement is limited to the actual POV mileage, along with other POV-related expenses such as parking, ferry fees, and tolls, not to exceed the constructive cost of travel by air/rail or rental car, whichever is less.

Documentation of what the cost of a common carrier ticket would have been if it had been purchased at

least three weeks before the event (print out from a travel site that shows flight options) and provide documentation for miles driven (Google Maps or other) and any other related costs must accompany the reimbursement request.

- Reimbursement is limited to the GSA mileage rate at the time of travel.
- If the mileage rate in the subgrantee's travel policy is less than the GSA mileage rate, reimbursement is limited to the subrecipient's travel policy rate.
- Mileage is to be calculated from the individual's home or workstation (whichever is the lower mileage) to the destination address.
- A mileage reimbursement form is required and should provide name of traveler, dates of travel, destination of travel, purpose of travel, and miles traveled and include documentation of the distance traveled must be provided (Google Maps or similar). The mileage reimbursement form should be signed by the employee and approved by an approving official. Proof of reimbursement of the mileage expense to the employee must also be included.

### Car Rental

- **REQUIRES PRIOR APPROVAL** from your assigned program associate. Rental cars cannot be charged to the NCA grant unless the agency has clearly demonstrated that this is the least expensive means of transportation travel. This includes the cost of the rental car as well as any parking fees that may be incurred. *\*Budget approval does not satisfy the prior approval requirement.*
- Travelers must use the least expensive compact car available, unless an exception for another class of vehicle is approved during the prior approval process.
- Subgrantees must include car rental as a budget line item and may not be claimed under mileage or fuel expenses.
  - The cost of any insurance will not be reimbursed, and such costs must be deducted from the claim for reimbursement.
  - The rental car must be refueled prior to returning it to the rental agency. Although the cost of gas needed for the trip itself may be reimbursed (a receipt is required), NCA cannot cover any additional costs associated with failure to refuel as required by the rental agreement.

### Parking/Tolls

- Parking and tolls may be reimbursed when using a personal or rental vehicle. Valet parking will be reimbursable when "self-parking" is not available or is cost effective and practical (costs less, one fee with in/out privileges). Receipts for parking and tolls must accompany all requests for reimbursement.

### Taxi/Ride-share (e.g. Uber, Lyft)

- Transportation via taxi/Uber/Lyft or public transportation between airport and hotel may be reimbursed

and/or between the meeting/conference space. All other non-business related transportation (such as from event to restaurant) are unallowable expenses.

- Receipts for Taxi, cab fare or shared ride service (Uber, Lyft) must also indicate the starting point and destination.
- Cancelled or missed ride share (Uber, Lyft, etc.) costs are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Tips for transportation expenses are allowable up to 20% of the total cost.

### *Airline Travel*

- The lowest economy class (sometimes called coach, standard economy fare class or base airfare) of transportation must be used.
- Every effort should be made to secure airfare at least 21 days in advance.
- Baggage/Luggage fees are allowable expenses for reimbursement.
- A detailed receipt/itinerary must be provided, which shows the passenger's name, date and location of flight, class of service and payment method.
- Cancellation, ticket change, attrition, or seat upgrade fees will not be reimbursed.

## **Meal and Incidentals (M&I Per Diem) Reimbursement**

NCA allows grantees to include M&I per diem in their award budget. The per diem system is intended to simplify reimbursement and align with standard Federal Travel Regulations, which provide a fixed daily rate for meals and incidentals which may differ based on the travel destination (high-cost areas vs. standard locations). This method ensures equitable treatment for all grantees and reduces administrative complexity for both the grantee and NCA.

- Only M&I Per Diem paid directly to the traveler is eligible for reimbursement. Actual expense reimbursement will not be approved, even if it is less than the GSA rate.
- If your agency has its own travel policy, it must allow or address payment to travelers for M&I Per Diem.
- Per Diem may NOT be claimed for same day travel, or travel where the destination does not exceed fifty miles or more from their home or place of employment (whichever is closest). Overnight travel must be involved to claim Per Diem.
- On the first and last day of travel, only 75 percent of the total M&IE rate for the travel location is reimbursable. For your convenience, the grant reporting workbook has an M&I Per Diem calculator which will help you calculate the amounts.
- Meals included in registration fees or that are part of a training/conference/meeting may not be claimed for reimbursement.
- In addition to proof of reimbursement to the traveler, an internal travel/reimbursement form is required

and should show the date of travel, destination of travel, purpose of travel, and detailed information about the request (e.g. M&I rate). The internal travel/reimbursement request form should be signed by the employee and approved by an approving official.

## Lodging

- Lodging nightly rates **cannot exceed the GSA rate** in place at the time of the stay. The room **must be at or below the nightly per diem rate** or NCA cannot reimburse for the expense at all. We cannot reimburse at even a partial rate.
- Lodging/overnight travel is only allowed if travel takes the individual fifty miles or more from their home or place of employment (whichever is closest). The event or reason for travel must last more than 7.5 working hours.
- Individuals are responsible for incidental expenses charged to their hotel room (i.e., refrigerator, movies, telephone, laundry, valet, bar, etc.)
- An **itemized zero-balance** receipt that shows the traveler's name, rate, taxes and fees for each night and that the bill has been paid in full is required for reimbursement.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q: Can we stay in a hotel that is over the nightly per diem rate and just ask NCA to reimburse up to the federal per rate and have our agency use other funds to pay the balance?*

*A: No. The room must be at or below the federal nightly per diem rate. We cannot reimburse at even a partial rate.*

*Q: What if we share a room? If the rate is over per diem, can we split the cost and each claim half?*

*A: No. Regardless of the number of people in the room, the nightly rate must be at or below the federal per diem rate.*

*Q: The hotel has one night below the per diem rate and one night above. If we average them, it comes out to the nightly per diem rate. Is that allowable?*

*A: No, although you can seek reimbursement for the night that is below the per diem rate.*

*Q: The conference I am attending is at a hotel that does not have rooms at or below the federal per diem rate. Can I get reimbursed at the rate the conference has available?*

*A: No. It is the responsibility to obtain a room at the hotel or a nearby hotel at or below the federal nightly rate. Ride share (Uber/Lyft/Taxi) expenses to and from the hotel and conference location are allowable for conference activities.*

*Q: A group of us are going to a training and want to rent a house through AirBNB. It will be cheaper than hotels. Can we do that?*

*A: Yes. Each person staying at the facility will have to have a receipt that shows a nightly rate at or below the federal nightly per diem rate. If the participants are sharing a room, the room can only be charged once, and a breakdown is required from the vendor. If it is a group bill, you cannot split it and average the cost. We cannot reimburse for cleaning fees. The reservation must be booked directly through AirBNB.*

*Q: I booked my hotel and airfare on a discount travel site and the receipt doesn't show a breakout between airfare and lodging.*

*A: No, all receipts must be itemized and show specifically what is being charged. This includes being billed on a nightly basis and a breakout to document any taxes and fees being charged.*

*Q: We have mileage and credit card travel points available to use to book our travel. Will we be reimbursed if we book our airfare and lodging using our travel points?*

*A: No. Expenses purchased using any rewards program, such as mileage points, credit card travel points, my wallet funds, gift cards, or other personal rewards programs are not eligible for reimbursement.*

*Q: I have flight credit available due to a previous cancelled flight. Will we be reimbursed if we book our flight using the available credit?*

*A: Yes. Expenses paid by flight credits due to a previously cancelled flight may be reimbursed with the appropriate documentation attached to the expense report. The previous cancelled flight may be personal or business. Required documentation:*

- *The original ticket(s) that the flight credit came from*
- *Confirmation of the cancelled flight and/or when the flight amount turned into a credit*

*Q: The person who was going to attend the training got sick and couldn't go. We had to pay a cancellation fee. Can we still be reimbursed for the cost of the ticket? How about the cancellation fee?*

*A: In order to reimburse for travel to a training or event, there must be documentation that the person actually attended the event. Unfortunately, reimbursement cannot be provided for the flight unless the ticket is used for another training within the grant year that is consistent with the approved goals and objectives of your grant, in which case you could seek reimbursement at that time. We cannot pay for change fees or canceled ticket fees.*

*Q: I hate to fly and would rather drive to the training, even though it is several hours away. Can I submit my mileage?*

*A: Grant funded travel must be conducted using the most expeditious mode and route practicable. The*

most advantageous transportation mode by order of precedence is common carrier (air, train, or bus) and rental car. An agency may authorize the use of a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) only after the agency evaluates the advantage of using the other modes of transportation.

If travel by a POV is selected when it is not the most expeditious mode and route practicable, reimbursement is limited to the actual POV mileage, along with other POV-related expenses such as parking, ferry fees, and tolls, not to exceed the constructive cost of travel by common carrier or rental car, whichever is less, including the constructive cost of travel to and from the common carrier terminals.

Documentation of what the cost of a common carrier ticket would have been if it had been purchased at least three weeks before the event (print out from a travel site that shows flight options) and provide documentation for miles driven (Google Maps or other) and any other related costs must accompany the reimbursement request.

TRAVELER'S NAME:		
AUTHORIZED LOCATIONS WITH ZIP CODES AND DATES OF TRAVEL:		<input type="radio"/> One-Way <input checked="" type="radio"/> Round-Trip
A. Enter the Constructed Cost of commercial transportation between the authorized locations. Use the Lowest Economy Fare. (airplane, bus, rail)	\$ 574.00	
B. Enter baggage fees:	\$ -	
C. Common carrier parking fees:	\$ -	
D. Mileage (travel to and from terminals; start and end)	0.00	miles
E. Mileage (travel to and from terminals to destination location)	0.00	miles
B. Enter the current mileage rate.	\$ 0.655	
<b>POLICY CONSTRUCTED COST:</b>	<b>\$ 574.00</b>	
A. Enter rental vehicle cost (Travelers must use the least expensive compact car available, unless an exception for another class of vehicle is approved. See FTR § 301-10.450)	\$ 200.00	
B. Additional expenses, such as parking, ferry fees, and tolls	\$ -	
C. Any additional per diem expense that would not be required if traveling via the most expeditious mode and route practicable	\$ -	
<b>ESTIMATED RENTAL CAR COST:</b>	<b>\$ 200.00</b>	
A. Enter POV mileage:	802	miles
C. Additional expenses, such as parking, ferry fees, and tolls	\$ -	
D. Any additional per diem expense that would not be required if traveling via the most expeditious mode and route practicable	\$ -	
<b>POV COMPUTED COST:</b>	<b>\$ 525.31</b>	

Example of an evaluation of the advantage of using the other modes of transportation

**Q:** I am a frequent flyer on the airline I am using, and I can upgrade my seat. Is that allowable?

**A:** You must purchase the most economical flight option. If your airline provides a free upgrade after purchasing the ticket, that is fine. The receipt from the airline must show the least expensive option, which is usually coach. We will not cover the costs of premium seat selection.

**Q:** Can I reimburse a consultant/contractor for travel?

**A:** Yes, however travel costs and reimbursement must be included as part of their contract/MOU. All consultant travel **MUST** follow the same guidelines as non-consultant travel. If your agency has its own

*travel policy, it must address consultant/contractor travel.*

*Q: Can I request reimbursement for the actual cost of meals, as long as the overall daily amount does not exceed the M&I Per Diem rate?*

*A: No. Actual expenses (i.e., the cost of meals or incidentals purchased) will not be reimbursed, regardless of the actual amount spent.*

*Q: While travelling, our agency paid for meals using a company credit card. The cost of the meals did not exceed the M&I Per Diem rate. Is that allowable?*

*A: No. Actual expenses (i.e., the cost of meals or incidentals purchased) are unallowable, even if purchased through a company card.*

*Q: Our written travel policy states that employees will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals during approved travel, and receipts are required for reimbursement. Is it an allowable expense if we reimburse our employees based on M&I Per Diem rather than actual costs?*

*A: No. If your agency's written travel policy does not allow or address reimbursement for M&I Per Diem, the expense is unallowable. Although, if your written travel policy is revised to allow for M&I Per Diem reimbursement and the changes are board-approved and have gone through the proper approval process, any future expense would then be allowable.*

## **Additional Resources**

- [2 CFR §200.475 Travel costs](#)
- [Federal Travel Regulations](#)
- [General Services Administration: Travel Resource Feature](#)

This resource has been carefully prepared by the National Children's Alliance (NCA) for general grant management informational purposes only. This resource does not constitute legal, accounting, tax, or other professional advice. While NCA makes every effort to update content on a regular basis, we recognize each grantee's unique operating environment. NCA recommends consultation with independent advisors as well as review of the most recent versions of the DOJ Grants Financial Guide and the OMB Uniform Guidance when making any decisions about your award, requirements, or individual circumstances. NCA reserves the right to revise this guidance. Any changes will be posted on the NCA Engage Grantee Resource Page.