

Using an NCA Grant to Travel

NCA Travel Policy and Frequently Asked Questions

NCA grantees often travel in order to enhance programming and to conduct trainings. Frequently, members, staff, faculty, consultants, and program participants bill their travel to their NCA grant. Such travel must be performed consistently with federal guidelines. Please note, the grantee must attend the training or other approved event in order to be reimbursed. This means that the training expenses should be included in the report following the training.

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

Persons traveling at NCA's expense will limit their expense claims to the period of the meeting. If a participant finds it necessary to arrive at the meeting location the night before the meeting, NCA will provide reimbursement for expenses related to that evening's accommodations. Similarly, if an evening session commences a meeting, expenses will be reimbursed for travel that day.

Dates, Destination, and Purpose

Please submit documentation of dates, arrival and departure times, final destination, and the purpose of each trip. All trips must be for NCA/CAC related business and, if grant funds are being used to travel, within the approved grant activities and budget.

Since no policy can cover every conceivable circumstance, it is anticipated that occasionally there will occur a unique situation. Questions should be directed to your assigned Program Associate.

Transportation

1. The most economical form of transportation must be used. For travel by air or train, this is generally coach/economy.
2. 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 you actually book your airfare. 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 (print out a copy of the information from the airline/train website or other travel website).

3. Expenses for mileage by auto will be reimbursed at the current federal per diem rate. This rate is determined by the IRS and available at www.gsa.gov. Documentation of the distance traveled must be provided (MapQuest or similar).
4. Receipts for ground transportation (Cab service or shuttle) to and from airports and to and from the hotel and the event must be provided. Ground transportation to and from social activities, including meals, will not be reimbursed, as it is not an allowable expense. You will not be reimbursed for tips and the receipt should break out the actual fare if a tip is provided.
5. The federal per diem for mileage is meant to reimburse the agency for use of the vehicle and the cost of gas.
6. 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 and has obtained prior approval by their Program Associate. If rental car insurance is obtained, it is the sole responsibility of the grantee and will not be reimbursed. 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.
7. Baggage fees will not be reimbursed for trips that only require a one or two night stay. If the airline you are traveling on charges for both checked and carry-on baggage, you must choose the least inexpensive method.

Meals and Incidentals Breakdown

Grant award funds may not be utilized for the purchase or reimbursement of food/meals. This is a disallowed cost.

Lodging

1. NCA will reimburse only lodging costs that are up to the federal nightly per diem rate for the location and date of the training plus taxes only.
2. Individuals are responsible for incidental expenses charged to their hotel room (i.e., refrigerator, movies, telephone, laundry, valet, bar, etc.)
3. Lodging costs that exceed the federal nightly per diem rate as published on www.gsa.gov for the dates and destinations of travel cannot be charged to these grant funds. They are unallowable costs.

Spouse and Guests

1. Travel expenses, as specified in these guidelines, are reimbursable for the authorized traveler only.

2. 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.

Other Considerations

NCA will only reimburse for the standard travel costs of the authorized agency representative. If a traveler wishes to upgrade, that traveler assumes the additional expense.

Frequently Asked Questions

Please review the Allowable and Unallowable Costs document in the RFP as Attachment III, or the Electronic Grantee Handbook, both of which are on our Member website at nca-online.org.

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 has to 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 has to 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.

Q: What type of documentation from the hotel do I need to be reimbursed?

A: You will need an itemized zero balance receipt - that is one that shows the rate, taxes and fees for each night and that the bill has been paid in full. You

must pay for any items such as internet, room service, phone calls, etc. separately and should obtain a receipt without those items listed if possible. If not, put a line through the items that you paid for separately and make a note on your reimbursement request.

Q: I am staying with friends instead of a hotel. Can I still be reimbursed?

A: No.

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.

Q: The hotel I stayed at was above the per diem rate, but we had a credit with the hotel from an earlier stay and we applied that to the bill. Using the credit reduced the cost so that the average room per night charge is at the per diem rate. Can we be reimbursed since the average is at the per diem rate?

A: You will need to obtain a zero balance receipt from the hotel showing that the nightly room rate was at or below per diem. The problem with applying the credit to the overall bill is that there is no way to show if any one night was at or below per diem. For example, if the rate was applied to reduce the rate for just one night, the other nights would be above per diem. If you have an invoice from the hotel showing that the credit was applied to each night, thus lowering the rate to the correct per diem rate, we could reimburse for that expense. The invoice has to show the correct per diem rate for each night listed. Also make sure that any taxes and fees are based on the per diem rate, not the original higher room rate. Please request documentation from the hotel when you check out.

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: Unfortunately, NCA may cover only costs that are documented to meet the federal per diem rate, thus the receipt needs to be itemized showing a breakout of the costs and lodging separately. If the vendor can provide this additional documentation, it could be considered.

Q: I am staying with friends in the area and rented a car instead of paying for a hotel. Can I be reimbursed since it was less expensive?

A: You can only be reimbursed for a rental car if it is approved in writing in advance by your Program Associate. The cost of a room and a rental car are

separate things and are not interchangeable, so you would have to show that a rental car was the least expensive form of ground transportation. You would also have to show that staying with friends and using a rental car was less expensive than staying at the hotel and using ground transportation. To do that, you have to be able to document those actual costs for the days in question (per diem rate for that area, estimated ground transportation using a web calculator or shuttle estimate).

Q: I am planning to stay over in the area after the conference for a few days that are not work related. Can I still be reimbursed for travel costs?

A: Yes, however you will have to document the difference in costs. For airfare, you have to show what it would cost to fly if you were not staying over and the costs of flying out at a later date/time. You can document that by printing out a comparison sheet from an online travel site that shows different flight options. This needs to be printed out on the same day you book your flight. We will reimburse up to the lower rate.

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: Yes, but we can only pay for the cost of the flight or mileage, whichever would be less. You will have to document what the cost of a ticket would have been if it has 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 (MapQuest or other) and any other related costs (airport parking vs. parking at event, ground transportation costs related to flying, etc.).

Q: I am a frequent flyer on the airline I am using and I am able to 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 has to show the least expensive option, which is usually coach. We will not cover the costs of premium seat selection.

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 has to 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: The airline I am using charges even for carry-on bags. Can I be reimbursed even if the training is less than three days?

A: When selecting your flight, keep in mind other costs such as carry-on fees, when purchasing the least expensive ticket option. You will have to demonstrate that, including the carry-on fee, the flight was the least expensive option. If you have a choice between checking the bag and carrying it on, you must select the least expensive option in order to be reimbursed. Again, please document this.

Q: Why no tips?

A: Although we appreciate your support of the service industry, Federal financial guidelines do not allow us to reimburse for tips.

Q: What about tolls?

A: We can reimburse for toll charges but you will need a receipt.

Q: We stopped for lunch on the way to the airport? Can we claim the cab fare?

A: No, we can only reimburse for ground transportation to and from the airport to the hotel and to and from the training site to the hotel or airport.

Q: Does the NCA staff have to follow these same travel rules?

A: Yes we do. The travel policy is fashioned after the internal NCA policy for staff travel and is consistent with DOJ financial regulations.

For additional guidance, please contact your assigned Program Associate.