



Downstate Health Sciences University
Office of Research Administration

The Research Foundation for SUNY Policy and Procedure

Subject: **Travel**

Effective Date: April 1, 2024

Issued By: The Office of Research Administration (ORA)

Responsible parties:

- Any individual using Research Foundation funds for business travel

Reason for this policy:

A Principal Investigator (PI) authorizing travel on a sponsored project for themselves, their staff, or an external entity is expected to be thoroughly familiar with the Research Foundation (RF) Travel Handbook and communicate the policy to prospective travelers. This campus guidance is intended to supplement the [RF Travel Handbook](#) and provide clarifying information to Downstate Health Science University (DHSU) faculty. Granular details for all the policies herein can be found in the RF Travel Handbook.

Background:

Travel costs are typically allowable on sponsored awards if they are reasonable, allocable, and related to the award's purpose. Some sponsors may have additional travel requirements. A sponsor's travel policy requirements take precedence over the equivalent RF and SUNY (State University of New York) Downstate requirements if the travel is to be charged to that sponsored award.

Before Travel:

- When traveling internationally, provide the Foreign Travel Disclosure Form at least two weeks before the scheduled departure date.
- Check [per diem rates](#) for the area. Rates exceeding the Maximum Per Diem will require prior approval by PI and/or the Operations Manager (OM).
- Common carrier (airfare, trains, bus, taxi), meals and conference registration expenses may be included in a travel advance request. No reimbursement is given for payment with a personal card until travel is completed.
- The Research Foundation reimburses for economy travel with no upgrades.
- The PI should ensure appropriate Project, Task and Award information is provided for a Travel Advance request and that the account has the funds on the appropriate budget line to support the trip. Travel must occur during the project period.

Travel Advances:

Travel Advance requests should be submitted at least 2 weeks before the planned date of departure. Procurement Cards (P-cards) cannot be used for transportation costs and/or lodging expenses.

For questions about allowability, consult Accounts Payable and/or your Grant Manager in advance of submitting the Travel Advance request.

Transportation:

Travelers should use the most efficient and cost-effective method of transportation available. Often this means using a common carrier such as a train, bus, taxi, or airplane. When choosing a method of transportation several factors should be considered, including the distance traveled, the travel time, number of travelers, number of locations to be visited, and type of transportation available.

When a common carrier is available, but a more expensive method is chosen without sufficient justification, reimbursement may be limited to the common carrier rate. All original receipts must be attached to the voucher to show means of transportation and the amount paid.

Rental vehicles are appropriate if it is in the best interest of the project. Proper justification should be provided upon request submission. Aside from the vehicle rental cost, tolls, parking fees, and gas are reimbursable. Non-reimbursable costs include the costs of personal accident insurance or personal effects insurance, citations, violations, and vehicle upgrades such as satellite radio. Please see page 21 of the [RF Travel Handbook](#) for additional information regarding the RF's contract with Enterprise.

If a trip is cancelled and the traveler is unable to travel, he/she will be responsible for any costs already incurred. These costs cannot be charged to an award; **refundable tickets should be utilized wherever possible.**

Methods of Reimbursement:

Travelers must be reimbursed for travel and lodging using one of the following methods:

- Method I: a per diem allowance, which reimburses lodging, meals, and incidental expenses **without** use of receipts.
- Method II *modified* per diem allowance, which requires receipts for lodging reimbursements. Receipts are not required for meals and incidental expenses (M & IE) when giving a per diem.

Travelers should choose one of the two methods for the entire trip. In both methods, lunch is not reimbursable. The per diems include expenses such as tips to bellmen, hotel housekeeping, etc.

Travelers are encouraged to use one of the methods listed above, however reimbursement based on detailed, itemized receipts for meals is allowable. Any unallowable expenses on the receipts will not be reimbursed, including amounts exceeding the daily per diem rate, alcohol, and/or lunch.

International Travel:

Canada: Some sponsors consider Canadian travel to be domestic travel while others consider it foreign travel. Travelers should check sponsor guidelines to determine how the sponsor classifies travel to Canada and categorize it accordingly for payment purposes. Even when travel to Canada is considered domestic by the sponsor, travelers should claim foreign rates for payment unless the award instrument or sponsor regulation provides otherwise.

Export Controls: U.S. export control and sanctions programs may affect your foreign travel. Technical data including e-documents, drawings and software may be controlled under US regulations and require permission to take to another country. This includes data on laptops and other smart devices that remain in your possession. While many of these items can be temporarily exported under the EAR (Export Administration Regulations) license exception “Temporary exports - Tools of the Trade” (TMP) or Baggage (BAG), this needs to be confirmed and it is responsibility of the traveler to ensure that they are complying with the regulations. The traveler should complete the Foreign Travel Disclosure Form and work with the Export Controls and Research Compliance Officer, as necessary.

It is strongly suggested that employees do NOT travel with their own electronic devices when traveling abroad. A traveler may request a loaner laptop from the Export Controls and Research Compliance Officer. If the traveler chooses to travel with a personal laptop or cell phone, all data and information must be saved to the cloud prior to traveling; a waiver will be required in these instances, in line with the TMP and BAG exemptions noted above.

Fly America Act: Compliance with the [Fly America Act](#) is of particular importance for international travel on federal awards which requires that any air transportation to, from, between, or within a country other than the United States is provided by a U.S. Flag Carrier when such is available.

Travel Warnings: Travelers going to any country indicated by the U.S. State Department with a travel warning of level 3 or 4 must have advanced written approval from the campus operations manager (OM) and/or designee. The OM will send notification to the campus president, with written notice to the RF's Central Office (RFInternationalTravel@rfsuny.org) before travel occurs. It is the responsibility of the traveler to check the [Current Travel Warnings](#) list before traveling, obtain the necessary authorization, and read and abide by the information in the travel warning.

Meals & Incidentals: Payment for foreign travel is calculated using Method I and no receipts are required for lodging or meals. The rates are per diem allowances including meals, lodging, and incidental expenses. When sponsors allow foreign travel but do not provide a schedule of allowance, the U.S. State Department's [Maximum Travel Per Diem Allowances for Foreign Areas](#) must be used. These rates are subject to change monthly.

Insurance:

Trip Cancellation Insurance: Reimbursement is allowed for protection against changes in travel plans (e.g., airfare refundable insurance). It is noted that non-refundable airline tickets must not be charged to a sponsored program award if a trip is canceled.

Travel Insurance: While traveling internationally on RF business, employees and their immediate family members may be covered under the RF's blanket international travel assistance coverage, subject to the limitations and exceptions when using the RF's International insurance program. For additional information, refer to the [BlueCross BlueShield Global information](#) on RF's website.

Rental Vehicles: The Research Foundation carries a non-owned automobile liability insurance policy to protect the RF against claims and losses arising from injury or property damage to third parties. Additional named insureds on the RF's policy include employees, principal investigators, volunteers, and others who are working within the scope of their employment on RF business or who are conducting RF business under the direction of a principal investigator or other person authorized to act on behalf of the RF. For more information, see the RF Travel Handbook.

Vehicles for RF business should be rented in the name of the Research Foundation. This ensures that both the RF and the traveler are properly covered by insurance and eliminates any confusion regarding liability for coverage in the event of an insurance claim. The cost of Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) or Personal Effects Insurance (PEI) is not reimbursable.

Independent Contractors:

Payments to reimburse an independent contractor for travel do not have to be reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) if the contractor provides adequate documentation of the expenses to the RF. See the [RF Travel Handbook](#) for more information.

Travel, subsistence, and other personal expenses may be paid to an independent contractor, if provided for in the contract. Those expenses must be paid in accordance with the travel policies and procedures of RF and SUNY Downstate.

Procurement MUST have a copy of the Independent Contractor Agreement and associated paperwork for the period in which the trip occurred. Travel will not be reimbursed if not clearly outlined in the agreement.

Honorariums/Lecturers:

Please contact Procurement to arrange for transportation for the speaker to campus.

After Travel:

- Supporting documentation for trip expenses including the trip's business purpose, itemized receipts, and the conference/meeting agenda must be submitted with the reimbursement request.
- Approval by Supervisor and/or PI is required.
- Reimbursement of travel expenses requests must be submitted to AP/Procurement within 30 days of return. Completing the RF Travel Expense Form promptly will ensure accurate claims and quicker reimbursements for the traveler.
 - Please note that any travel reimbursements for Research Foundation-funded travel that are 90 days beyond the last date of travel will be forwarded to the Payroll Office and will be subject to tax as per IRS regulations.

- All expenses must be recorded and attached to a completed RF Travel Expense Form. Providing a completed form in addition to the following items can help expedite a reimbursement. Please note a traveler will not be reimbursed for another individual's travel expenses.
 - Date and time of departure - this determines which meals are reimbursable. Meals may be reimbursed on the RF Travel Expense Form on a per diem basis based on location of lodging. If meals are provided or paid for by another source related to the scheduled event, the traveler will not be reimbursed.
 - Mileage documentation (i.e., Google Maps, MapQuest) if a personal vehicle was used.
 - Original receipts for hotel, conference registration, rental cars, and boarding passes (or travel agency print out), for any charges being claimed for reimbursement. Please note that bank and credit card statements are not accepted in lieu of actual receipts or folios for expenses.
 - For international travel, a copy of boarding passes must be provided.
 - Receipts must be provided for meal reimbursements for any non-overnight trips.
 - No reimbursement is allowed for lunch.
 - Receipts may not exceed the daily per diem rate.
- Added costs incurred for the convenience of the traveler, such as travel by circuitous routes or travel schedules that require nonessential sleeping accommodations, are the responsibility of the traveler.

The Research Foundation reserves the right to deny a travel reimbursement if deemed unallowable to the sponsored project.