

Institute for Medical Research, Inc.	Travel Reimbursement Policy	No. 706	
		Initial Effective Date 4/14/09	
		Revision Date 9/23/11 3/26/19	
		Final Approval	Approved by IMR Board of Directors: 03/29/2019

Purpose

The Institute for Medical Research’s mission is to further VA research and education. Accordingly, funds donated to and accepted by IMR may be used to reimburse travel expenses associated with supporting this mission. This policy defines how travel expenses are reimbursed.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals requesting travel reimbursement supported by IMR funding. This may include investigators, employees (administrative and research), and other project related staff. Examples of authorized travel include attendance at clinical and research meetings sponsored by professional societies, events focused on professional and patient education that advance the mission and meetings associated with funded research activities.

Note #1: Direct payment of educational and research travel expenditures:

Travel paid directly to vendors by IMR (check or charged to credit card) can be requested by investigators. These requests for travel must follow documentation policies that apply to regular expense requests, as well as meet the aforementioned standards relating to mission.

Note #2 Process for Registration Fees:

Unless special authorization has been requested from the Executive Director by the Investigator, conference or meeting registration fees should be requested in advance from IMR and will be paid directly to the sponsoring organization.

Guidelines to Obtain Reimbursement

A completed IMR Travel reimbursement form is required to obtain payment. Receipts must be attached in accordance with specific rules detailed in this policy and outlined on each form. Four IMR forms are available on the website for reimbursement:

IMR T001 Travel Advance *(Provides for 80% estimated expense and 100% airfare)*

IMR T002 Travel Advance Reconciliation

IMR T003 Travel Reimbursement

IMR T004 Travel Reimbursement for VA Employees

Authorization: Investigators must approve expenses based on available funds from active research or grant budgets or residual accounts. Approval also indicates official attestation that the travel expenses advance both the mission of IMR and the needs of a particular educational program or research project. When an employee submits a travel request, the PI should send an email approving the request. If the PI is the traveler, they are required to certify the appropriateness of the request by initialing a box provided on the IMR travel forms.

Certification. All recipients of travel reimbursement must certify their request on the box provided. This requires the employee to confirm the accuracy of their request and certify that they have not been reimbursed by any other source for the travel.

Advance Payments for Travel: A travel advance may be requested by completing IMR T001 Request for Travel Advance. Travel advances will be limited to 80% of anticipated expenses but 100% for airfare.

Upon return from travel, an IMR T002 Travel Advance Reconciliation must be completed and unsubstantiated amounts returned. If this form is not completed or any excess amount is not returned – the advance will be recorded as taxable income and reported to the IRS.

Travel Reimbursement to VA Employees: 38 USC § 7362(a) and 5 USC § 4111 provide for the authority for VA employees traveling on official duty related to IMR-funded research or education initiatives to be paid directly for their travel expenses. There is a two-step process for VA employees to obtain reimbursement.

Part 1. The VA employee must be on official duty. The travel must be authorized through the VA travel system (indicating no cost) and a VA Form 0893 must be signed by their Administrative Officer (AO) and approved by the Office of General Counsel (OCG). Note: See endnote on page three for VA Policyⁱ. The approved VA Form 0893 with documentation of the OCG ethics review is forwarded by the AO to the IMR Accounts Payable Administrator.

Part 2. After the travel has occurred, the VA employee completes an IMR T004 (Travel Reimbursement for VA Employees) and attaches all relevant original documentation. IMR staff match the IMR T – 004 to the VA 0893 and retains both as backup for payment. Reimbursement cannot exceed the approved Donated Travel amounts for any specific item.

Time Limit: Travel Reimbursement requests must be submitted within 60 days of the travel date. Requests made after 60 days will be denied unless reasonable justification is provided for late submission to the Executive Director.

Reimbursement Rates:

In general, the IMR travel reimbursements are based on federal rates. Maximum transportation reimbursement shall be limited to the most reasonable method of travel, which is usually coach airfare. The IRS mileage rate will be used for private auto travel reimbursement. Lodging and per diem are reimbursed at the federal rate set by location.

Reimbursement for gratuities (taxi, limo, etc.) will be limited to no more than 20%. The traveler is responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business.

Specific details for each allowable reimbursement item are listed below:

Mileage (Auto): Mileage will be reimbursed at the set annual IRS rate for the documented distances required to attend an authorized travel event. Applicable tolls may be included. In the case that airfare is the lower cost option, use of personal auto must be approved by both the investigator and/or the Executive Director.

Airfare - Persons traveling on IMR funds cannot use government rate airfares and all flights must be booked at the coach rate. To obtain reimbursement, documentation must be submitted that details travelers name, flight, destination and charges paid (may include baggage fees).

Ground Transportation: Ground transportation will be reimbursed at actual costs with the submission of original receipts. Reimbursements are allowed for the following situations:

- To and from departure airport/train station plus parking if applicable.
- Transportation from arrival airport/train station to lodging or meeting location and return.
- Other ground transportation if it is required to accomplish authorized activities.

Rental Vehicles: Use of a rental car may be authorized for travel or ground transportation, if approved in advance by the Investigator and/or Executive Director with valid justification.

Lodging: Travelers will be reimbursed for reasonable lodging costs associated with attendance at an authorized event. Lodging at a location designated for a specific event/conference can be reimbursed. The prevailing federal hotel rates by location should be the guideline if a specific lodging site is not identified. Reimbursement for hotel will be limited to single rate occupancy.

To obtain reimbursement, the traveler must attach a copy of the charges. If a stay is five nights or more reimbursement can be requested for reasonable laundry/dry cleaning costs.

Meals/Per Diem - Meals and incidentals will be reimbursed at the prevailing federal per diem rate for the destination city. To see rates and guidelines: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. No receipts are required for meals and incidentals.

ⁱ **Department of Veterans Affairs November 2011 Non-Federal Source Funding (Donated Travel) Volume XIV – Chapter 9**

REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICIAL TRAVEL TO CONDUCT GOVERNMENT BUSINESS FUNDED BY DONATIONS FROM NON-VA SOURCES.

A. Payments will be by check or similar instrument made payable to “Department of Veterans Affairs”. Payments that are “in kind” (services or other benefits for travel provided directly by non-Federal sources) may be given directly to the employee. The employee and accompanying spouse or attendant, when applicable, may accept payments in excess of maximum per diem allowance when:

The non-Federal source pays the full amount of the per diem expense as authorized by VA; and

The expense paid by the non-Federal source is comparable in value to that offered to, or purchased by, other meeting attendees; and VA has approved acceptance of the payment from the non-Federal source prior to beginning travel.

B. When determined in advance of the employee’s travel that payment from the non-Federal source will cover some but not all of the employee’s allowable transportation and per diem expenses, the employee’s travel authorization will state that the employee will receive reimbursement for the difference between the authorized travel allowances and the payment received from a non-Federal source. When the authorized travel allowances will be exceeded, payment for actual expense is required in advance of the travel.

C. Employees (and the accompanying spouse or attendant, when applicable) will submit an expense voucher for all travel expense reimbursement claims which were not paid “in kind” by non-Federal sources. The submission of expense vouchers is required in VA’s E-Gov Travel Service (ETS) within five (5) business days after the completion of official travel.