

Academy Travel Guidance

Most travel conducted for The National Academies is funded at least in part by the federal government, and therefore must adhere to certain policies and regulations. The Academies also have internal procedures to facilitate financial and project tracking. The information presented in this document is an overview of the policies and regulations as well as some of the Academies procedures; please contact Gin Bacon for more details or with questions.

Travel Code

Each travel event at the Academies has a unique travel code that your Academies staff will provide you. Please make note of this code; you will need the code for some travel and hotel reservations. This code allows us to track costs and resolve billing disputes easily. The travel code for the meeting you are attending is included in the travel memo.

Per Diem

The General Services Administration sets per diem rates for domestic lodging and meals and incidental expenses annually and may adjust the rates periodically. New per diem rates are effective every October 1. Rates for Hawaii, Alaska, and US territories and possessions are set by the Department of Defense. Rates for international locations are set by the Department of State.

Expenses should not exceed the total per diem rate. Academies staff will advise you of the per diem rate for the meeting location, or you may visit www.gsa.gov to find current per diem rates.

Meals provided by the Academy during meeting hours are included in the per diem rate. These rates will be listed in the travel expense report issued by the appropriate travel coordinator. Meals that are provided during the meeting are not reimbursable if taken elsewhere.

Lodging

The National Academies use thousands of hotel rooms every month, most of which are contracted at federal per diem rates. Because per diem rates for lodging usually are not competitive with hotels' generally published rates, we patronize our vendors before using any other vendors.

Hotel accommodations usually are made well in advance of the meeting. If your Academies staff already has reserved rooms at a local hotel, please do not make reservations at another hotel because the Academies will be charged for the reserved but unused room.

Let staff know immediately if you will be unable to use a reserved room. With sufficient lead time, it may be possible to cancel the reservation without penalty.

All rooms are held for late arrival. If staff advise you that the room is being direct billed to the Academies, you will not be charged the nightly rate. You will, however, be responsible for incidental expenses.

Please let Academies staff know as soon as possible if you have any special needs that the hotel must accommodate or if you plan to stay additional nights.

Transportation

Travel by Air

Air travel by staff and guests on Academies business should be planned and booked as far in advance as possible to take advantage of the least-expensive fares available. As a general rule, travelers must fly in economy class at the lowest reasonable fare (usually a nonrefundable ticket). Exceptions must be requested and approved in advance.

Note: Airlines may charge an additional fee for checked baggage. Any fee charged for the first checked bag is reimbursable; fees for additional bag(s) are not.

Booking Air Travel

For domestic travel, you may book your own travel; however, using one of the Academies' travel agencies is the most convenient and preferred because our agencies are familiar with our policies, procedures, and exceptions, and they can document your itinerary appropriately. The Academies also have negotiated rates with several airlines, and booking travel through the Academies' travel agencies helps ensure that the Academies discounts are continued and the Academies receive credit with the airlines

Travel outside the United States *must* be booked through the agency listed in the travel memo to ensure federal law—e.g., the Fly America Act—is complied with. Flights that do not comply with federal law cannot be reimbursed from federal (and sometimes private) funds.

Making Stops En Route or Early Arrival/Late Departure

You will be reimbursed for the cost of travel that is necessary to accomplish the National Academies' mission in the most economic and effective manner. Generally, reimbursement for travel is limited to the cost of travel by a direct route without stops for additional personal or business reasons within the confines of the established meeting dates.

If you need to make an additional stop, stops en route to the meeting or after the meeting, or travel outside of the meeting dates, please let Gin Bacon know in advance via email so comparative (“constructive”) costs upon which reimbursement can be based may be obtained. You will be reimbursed for the cost of a direct round trip between your permanent place of business and the Academies' meeting place or the face value of the ticket, whichever is less.

The constructive cost of direct travel must be based on the most economic fare under the circumstances and must be established at the same time travel reservations are made. The easiest way to do this is to use one of the Academies travel agencies to book your travel so that your itinerary can be documented with the constructive cost. If the constructive cost is not determined in advance, it will be determined by the National Academies by referencing the lowest reasonable cost available after the fact by the National Academies Travel Office or a National Academies travel agency.

If you expect to be reimbursed by a third party for any part of your travel, costs should be allocated appropriately.

Your travel memo contains information on contacting the appropriate travel agency.

Travel by Train

If you travel by train, you must use coach-class accommodations, except when traveling by Acela trains, which only offer business and first-class accommodations. In that case, you may use business class. Your train fare must not exceed the constructive cost (see above) of a round-trip air fare.

Travel by Personal Vehicle

You will be reimbursed for mileage when you use your personal vehicle to attend Academies' business. Reimbursement rates for automobiles, motorcycles, and personal aircraft are set regularly by GSA. Reimbursement cannot be made for more than the constructive cost of a round-trip air fare.

Travel to and from the Airport or Train Station

Travelers on Academy business are asked to consider cost when planning their mode of travel to and from the airport or train station. In general, taxis should be used rather than a car and driver service unless the service is less expensive. If a car and driver service is essential,

please contact staff as the Academy has negotiated rates with some providers. Similarly, when parking a personal vehicle at the airport or train station, use long-term or daily lots rather than the hourly lot.

On-site Travel

As the Frontiers of Engineering provides transportation between the hotel and the meeting site, car rental expenses are not reimbursable.

Reimbursement

Academies staff will provide you with a travel expense voucher (TER) via email. Please retain receipts for all expenses that you wish to have reimbursed since we reimburse actual expenses only. Attach all receipts for reimbursement and return within 30-days after the meeting. You usually can expect reimbursement within 2-3 weeks of project staff receiving your TER.