

SIBCR Accounting FAQ - Travel & Reimbursement

1. What form is required for reimbursement?

All reimbursement requests must be submitted using the Travel Reimbursement Form with legible receipts and justification. This form is located here: <https://sibcr.org/external-policy-and-forms/>

2. Who do I contact with questions about travel and reimbursement requests?

For questions about whether travel is an allowable cost on an SIBCR-administered grant, contact your SIBCR grant administrator or spo@sibcr.org.

For questions about the allowability of specific types of costs and for foreign travel prior approval requests, please contact accounting@sibcr.org.

3. What are some expenses that are not reimbursable?

- Costs paid with reward programs (e.g., frequent flyer miles, credit card points, “my wallet” funds, gift cards).
- Missed, changed, or cancelled flight fees resulting from negligent travel planning.
- Ground transportation to meals such as dinners out with colleagues selected for personal preference or convenience.
- Incidental expenses are part of per diem allowance and may not be claimed separately, such as:
 - Tips to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel housekeeping, and similar services
 - Transaction, processing, or credit card fees (domestic or foreign)
 - Foreign currency exchange or conversion fees
 - ATM fees
- Medical insurance or medical/hospital fees.
- Travel Insurance (Trip Protection, Travel Cancellation Package, etc.) - unless a mandatory/unavoidable cost of doing business, for example, the program the traveler is participating in requires them to purchase it and there was no way to get around it.
- Refundable airfare.

4. What airfare costs are reimbursable?

- Book the **lowest available economy-class fare**.
- If higher-cost tickets are purchased, submit **contemporaneous cost comparisons**, showing the equivalent economy-class ticket purchased at the same time. Reimbursement will be limited to the value of the equivalent economy-class ticket.
- **Refundable tickets and airfare insurance are not reimbursable.**

5. What documentation is required for travel expenses?

- Itemized expenses must be supported with documentary evidence.
- Receipts must include all pertinent details—translated if in a foreign language—and must clearly show proof of payment.
- Supporting documentation should identify the payee, amount paid, date of the expense, and a description of the item or service that demonstrates its business purpose related to VA research and/or education. Acceptable documentation is provided below and, in some cases, a combination of documents may be required to fully substantiate an expense.

- ✓ Canceled checks or other proof of payment/electronic funds transfer
- ✓ Cash register receipts
- ✓ Account statements
- ✓ Credit card receipts and statements

6. When do I need to submit my travel reimbursement request?

IRS regulations require that travel expenses be submitted within **60 days** after the expense was paid or incurred.

What happens if I submit my claim after 60 days?

Claims submitted more than 60 days after travel must include a **written justification** explaining the reason for the delay. Late submissions may be **denied** if the justification is not sufficient.

Why is the 60-day deadline important?

The deadline is required to comply with IRS accountable plan rules and helps ensure timely and accurate reimbursement processing.

What should I include if my submission is late?

Provide a brief explanation describing why the claim could not be submitted within the 60-day timeframe. Approval is not guaranteed and depends on the circumstances.

7. What if I purchase a ticket with added features or higher cost?

Travelers who purchase tickets with added costs—such as refundable fares or airfare insurance—must submit contemporaneous cost comparisons showing the price of an equivalent economy-class ticket purchased at the same time.

Reimbursement will be limited to the value of the equivalent economy-class ticket only.

8. What are the requirements for foreign air travel?

All foreign travel charged to federal grants must be approved by SIBCR **prior** to the purchase of airfare. Requests may be sent to accounting@sibcr.org.

All foreign air travel funded by federal grants must comply with the Fly America Act, which requires the use of a U.S. flag air carrier. In many cases, compliance may be met through a U.S. airline code-share flight, even if the aircraft is operated by a foreign carrier. Limited exceptions exist and must be fully documented.

9. Can I use my personal car to travel?

Yes, but reimbursement cannot exceed the cost of comparable coach airfare. Mileage is reimbursed at IRS rates. Minimum state-required insurance is required.

10. Can I combine personal travel with a business trip?

Yes, but personal travel must not increase the cost to SIBCR. When combining personal and business travel:

- The total cost charged to SIBCR may not exceed what the business-only trip would have cost.
- Travelers must obtain contemporaneous cost comparisons, especially for airfare, to document the business-only cost.
- Any expenses that include both personal and business components must be prorated, with SIBCR reimbursing only the business portion.

11. Are rental cars reimbursable?

The cost of a rental automobile may be allowable under certain circumstances. However, car rental is allowable only as an exception. Specialty vehicles such as convertibles and SUVs are not allowable. If your plans include requesting reimbursement from SIBCR for the cost of a rental car, please contact accounting@sibcr.org for prior approval.

12. What ground transportation is covered?

Reimbursement is limited to travel between: home or workplace and airport, airport and meeting site, and return.

13. How are airline tickets purchased?

Travelers purchase their own tickets and request reimbursement after travel.

14. What lodging costs are reimbursable?

Reasonable and necessary lodging costs with original itemized receipts. Conference hotel rates are encouraged.

15. What are the per diem rules?

Meal and Incidental (M&IE) reimbursement requests must follow federal per diem rate limits. SIBCR does not require receipts for **M&IE per diem** reimbursements. Foreign travel per diem rates follow the foreign rate limits.

- US federal per diem rates: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>
- Foreign per diem rates: https://allowances.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp

16. What documentation is required in addition to receipts and proof of payment for travel reimbursement requests?

Provide documentation showing meeting dates, location, and purpose. The purpose must address how the travel relates to the award (being charged) and/or the traveler's VA R&D approved research or education programs.

17. Who approves my reimbursement request?

Travelers with delegated authority may certify by email. The responsible member or authorized designee must review and approve the form by signing it before sending it to SIBCR accounting at accounting@sibcr.org. Once received, SIBCR Accounting staff review the request and the SIBCR Executive Director, or delegate, must approve the payment. Once approved, a check is mailed to the traveler.