

Sponsored Projects Financial Management – FAQs

Welcome to the Research Financial Services LISTSERV series on “Sponsored Projects Financial Management” for answers to common questions. Sponsored project financial management requires the application of award terms and conditions along with Sponsor, Federal and Institutional policies and procedures. Note underlined sections are hyperlinks for further information.

(Previous FAQ editions [here](#))

Travel



What are travel costs? Transportation, lodging, subsistence and related items incurred by employees, participants, fellows, or students traveling on behalf of the University and its affiliated corporations on official business.

Are travel costs allowable on a grant? Travel costs can be allowable if the travel and costs meet the below criteria:

- Have a documented direct benefit to the project’s scope of work
- Length of the trip coincides with the travel objectives
- Travel is within the period of performance ***The period of performance is related to the incurred date which have been covered by a specific FAQ with examples [here](#).*
- Is necessary and reasonable
- Has available budget
- Is the lowest cost available for the needed business travel needs
- Travelers should normally have effort on the given project during the travel status
- Travel costs must follow University policies and Sponsor terms and conditions and Uniform Guidance (UG) when related to federal projects.

Where can I find policies and guidance on travel? UK’s Travel Services website is located [here](#) and has a complete guidance to the policies including [BPM E-5-1 Reimbursement of Travel Expenses](#) and [E-5-2 Travel Advances](#). Sponsor awards can include explicit travel terms, conditions, and regulations or will be available on their website and may be more restrictive than UK policy and must be followed. For those projects federally funded (projects listed as budget rule 4 on the PADR or GMGRANTD), UG can be found in section [200.475 Travel Costs](#). Any questions about a given project’s terms and conditions should be directed to the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration ([OSPA](#)) or the Collaborative Grant Services ([CGS](#)). *** Individual colleges, divisions, and departments may establish policies that are more restrictive than these referenced policies and opt to reimburse travelers less than the rates and amounts allowed in this policy. However, travelers must be notified in writing of the restrictions, and the restricted rates and allowances must be applied to all travel, regardless of the funding source.*

Can travel be booked before the grant starts? Travel, like hotel reservations, may be reserved provided a deposit or payment is not required but only with supervisor and business officer approval prior to incurring travel expenses. Any travel expenditure requiring deposit or payment must be made within the sponsored projects’ period of performance (the budget start and end dates). Although travel costs may be less expensive in advance, any expense incurred before the budget or pre-award start date is unallowable without sponsor approval. **Travel costs paid during the project’s period of performance but occurring after the budget end date are not allowable.**

What if travel occurs after the budget period? Dates of travel and travel expenditures must follow UG when applicable, University policy and Sponsor award terms and conditions. University policy has established travel purchases must be

made within the period of performance. The dates of travel must also occur within the period of performance unless approved by the sponsor. Any travel completed after the budget end date or occurring outside the budget period requires prior approval from the sponsor to be allowable. ***See [incurred date FAQ](#) with examples.*

Are there special policies for international travel? Yes. Travelers should discuss travel plans with knowledgeable area support staff prior to arranging travel. International travel has more stipulations than domestic travel. Traveler and/or support staff should review award terms and conditions for any travel restrictions. They should also confer with Travel Services' website on [international travel](#) procedures and understand UG section [200.475 Travel Costs](#) when funded by Federal funds. International airfare is required to be booked through a UK travel vendor and airlines used must comply with the [Fly America Act](#). When crossing the US border, most air travel is required to use a "US flag" airline carrier or meet one of the approved exceptions. Canada and US possessions and territories (like Puerto Rico, Guam, plus others) are not considered international. **All international travelers are required to register their trip with the University before their departure.** Any questions about a given project's terms and conditions should be directed to the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration ([OSPA](#)) or the Collaborative Grant Services ([CGS](#)).

Do I have to purchase airline tickets through UK travel vendors (AAA, Avant Travel or Concur Online Booking)? These [travel agencies](#) are contracted with UK to provide services along with economical rates. The University strongly encourages all travel arrangements be made through a UK travel vendor. However, domestic airfare can be booked through an alternate vendor. The University requires international airfare to be purchased through a UK travel vendor. In rare circumstances when travelers find cheaper international airfare through an alternate vendor, first consult with Travel Services if an exception is possible.

When are cost comparisons required? Per [BPM E-5-1](#), cost comparisons are required when a traveler chooses to drive a personal vehicle or a rental car over 500 miles one-way, a traveler chooses to combine business and personal travel or a traveler purchases international airfare through an alternate vendor. When combining business and personal travel or international airfare is purchased through an alternate vendor, and the airfare cost is greater than the comparison quotes, airfare is paid by the traveler and reimbursed based on the comparison.

My travel plans have changed. What do I do? (Updated 7/17/26)

1. Unavoidable costs may be allowable. Consult with CGS and OSPA for allowability.
2. When travel dates are outside the project's budget period (i.e. arrive earlier or stay later), these portions of costs are typically unallowable if the extended travel dates cannot be justified.

Can I upgrade my airfare ticket to first class, business class or row with more leg room? The University reimburses coach class airfare for domestic and international flights. However, with supervisor approval, business class will be reimbursed for eight hours or more of uninterrupted flight service. Reasonable ancillary fees including, but not limited to, expenses for convenient or early boarding, extended legroom, seat location, baggage, in-flight meals, and Wi-Fi service are approved at the supervisor's discretion. Also, flight upgrades for medical needs require pre-approval from the Campus Accessibility Director in the Office of Institutional Equity and Equality.

When is ground transportation/Uber/taxi costs allowable? Ground transportation is allowable to or from airport, hotel and event locations with supervisor approval. Ground transportation to or from restaurants, bars, shopping centers, and other unofficial business use locations are unallowable on the project.

What if I forgot to get a receipt? The university normally expects receipts for items paid by Procard and any request for reimbursement. Handwritten receipts are not an acceptable form of cost documentation. Per [BPM E-5-1](#), receipts must include the name and location of the establishment, an itemized listing of the goods or services provided, the date of the transaction and the amount paid. Airline receipts must include the ticket number, issue/purchase date, issuing vendor, traveler name, detailed itinerary with flight dates, time and destinations, purchase price including service fee and the form of payment. Receipts are required when the expense meets one of the two criteria listed below:

1. If the expense is not for lodging, receipts are required for all costs greater than \$75.00.
2. If the expense is for lodging, receipts are required for all amounts.

What is considered adequate documentation? If the traveler was a presenter, ideally a copy of the agenda listing the traveler and the name of their presentation would be provided. Alternative documentation would be a copy of the presentation (or at least the cover sheet, if the presentation is long) that includes the presentation title and the name of the presenter. If no formal presentation was made, or the traveler was only attending the conference/workshop, written documentation should include the business purpose of the travel, which includes the benefit to the Award, and a copy of the agenda or schedule as available. ***Note, most sponsored awards have terms and conditions requiring acknowledgement of the funding source. Presentations should acknowledge the projects receiving benefit and align with expense cost allocation.*

I'm attending a conference and meals are not provided. Can I turn in a meal receipt and collect per diem? No. Per diem allowance is a fixed amount paid for subsistence (meals) and incidentals in lieu of actual expenditures. Only business meals are reimbursed at actual cost. Travelers with dietary restrictions should consult University's Travel Services.

I'm attending a conference and meals were provided, but I didn't eat the food. Can I collect per diem? No. Meal per diem cannot be claimed when meals are included in registration fees or otherwise provided at no cost to the traveler as part of the event.

I'm attending a conference and tipped the hotel employee for delivering my luggage. Can I be reimbursed for the tip/gratuity? No, per [BPM E-5-1](#), laundry expense, baggage tips, housekeeping tips, and other lodging-related tips are considered incidental and are covered by the per diem rate and, therefore, are not reimbursable.

I gave two presentations on two awards. Can I charge all the travel costs to just one grant? No. Travel costs must be allocated amongst all awards benefiting from the travel unless reasonable justification can be provided. Allocable travel costs must be appropriately allocated to all funding sources benefiting from the travel.

How do I allocate travel when it benefits more than one project? When the traveler obtains prior approval from their Supervisor, approval should include the purpose, travel plans and how to allocate the costs among the projects receiving benefit. The method of allocating travel costs by the type of expense is not allowable. An example of an unallowable allocation method would be charging project A for lodging and project B the airfare. Acceptable allocation is by benefit to the project and/or by payroll cost distribution. The reasonable allocation method must be documented, applied to all related travel costs and included as supporting documentation.

- An example based on benefit: The traveler is presenting at a conference on two research projects. It would be appropriate to split costs evenly between the two projects. If determined the benefit to the projects are not even, justification is needed to explain the allocation used.
- An example based on benefit: The traveler is visiting University A for 2 days to monitor work on project A then visiting University B for 3 days to collaborate on project B. It would be appropriate to allocation costs based on the number of days at each location. It would be appropriate to charge 40% to project A and 60% to project B. (Project A: 2/5 days = 40%; Project B: 3/5 days = 60%)
- An example based on the traveler's project payroll cost distribution: The traveler is presenting at a conference on two research projects. The traveler has 25% payroll cost distribution on project A and 50% payroll cost distribution on project B. It would be appropriate to charge 33% to project A and 67% to project B. (Project A: 25%/75% = 33%; Project B: 50%/75%=67%)

Can I charge travel costs to a grant when the traveler's salary cost distributions were not charged? Possibly. It is expected that salary cost distributions reflect a person's effort for contributing to the scope of work. There are times when travel benefits a grant but the salary pay periods charged do not align with the travel dates. In these instances,

travel costs on a grant may be allowable. If the traveler does not have any salary charged to the grant at any time, the travel costs could be allowable with adequate justification detailing the benefit to the grant.

The conference I want to attend is scheduled after the project's budget period. Can I still charge travel costs to the grant if I make the purchases before the budget ends? No. Travel dates occurring outside the budget period does not meet allowable costing principles. Travel must take place within the budget period unless the sponsor has provided specific approval.

What type of processes should be in place to monitor travel? Tracking logs that identify who is traveling, why they are traveling, when the travel takes place and the allowable travel arrangements, should be completed. Frequently, travel arrangements are made at varying times. Department oversight processes need to ensure travel is well documented, the planned travel occurs, the purpose of the trip does not change, and the cost distribution is the same across all the travel costs using a verifiable method. In the event aspects of the trip have changed, all related prior financial postings and/or future funds commitments need validation for allowability. Journal voucher (JV) corrections to prior posted transactions may be needed.

What should be reviewed as part of the financial closeout for travel costs? As part of monthly [reconciliations](#) and financial closeout process, review that the faculty, staff, and student travel arrangements are allowable, applicable and expenses have posted. Any unposted travel expenditures ([how to find concur items here](#)) need to be processed as soon as possible. Please note that unposted concur Procard or travel documents do not individually display in SAP.

Is travel insurance allowed? As defined by BPM E-5-1, most travel insurance items are not allowed by policy and therefore are also not allowed on sponsored projects. International vehicle rental insurance is the only exception allowed. The University's policy does not cover international vehicle rentals and travelers are encouraged to purchase. Questions about this policy or university authorized expenses should be directed to [Travel Services](#).

If I use airline miles, can I be reimbursed for what the cost of the airfare would be? No. Because an actual expense was not incurred, there is no true expense to be reimbursed. Reimbursements can only be done on monetary costs.

Additional Resources:

- RFS: <https://ufs.uky.edu/research-financial-services>
- OSPA: <https://www.research.uky.edu/office-sponsored-projects-administration>
- CGS: <https://www.research.uky.edu/collaborative-grant-services>
- BPM: <https://www.uky.edu/ufs/business-procedures-manual>
- Sponsored Project Bits & Pieces Presentations: <https://ufs.uky.edu/sponsored-projects-bits-pieces-presentations>
- Sponsored Project Financial Management - FAQs Presentations: <https://ufs.uky.edu/sponsored-projects-financial-management-faqs>
- Uniform Guidance (UG): <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>