Travel & Expense Reimbursement

This policy outlines the procedures to be followed by staff members of the American Physical Society (APS) when processing Travel & Expense (T&E) Reports submitted by individuals (scholarship recipients, program participants, conference presenters, etc.) requesting reimbursement of expenses incurred during pre-approved travel to attend conferences and meetings or participate in other programs.

The procedures outlined in this policy apply to grant and non-grant related travel.

1.0 TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

It is the responsibility of program staff to inquire about and be aware of any budgetary limits regarding travel. The program budget may specify maximum expenditure per traveler and/or limits to specific travel expenses, such as lodging, airfare, meals, and local transportation.

1.1 NOTIFICATION

1. Program staff will notify traveler by email that travel has been authorized and specify terms of reimbursement when grant funds will be used. The notification email will:
   a. Clearly inform the traveler of any limitations of the budget and invite the traveler to contact program staff with any questions. Questions should be resolved before traveler makes arrangements.
   b. Include the link to the webpage housing the current version of the Grant Travel & Expense Report form (form), which includes travel reimbursement guidelines.
      • The Grant Travel & Expense Report form is in the Federal Grant Procedures manual.
      • Note that grant funded travel has more strict guidelines than APS funded travel for what can be reimbursed and what documentation is required.
   c. Include an email and/or mailing address for submitting completed forms and required documentation.
   d. Copy other staff members on travel authorization notifications as needed; if another staff member will be handling the forms, this person should be copied.

2. Once travel is complete, program staff will send one additional email reminding travelers to submit expenses when they are VIPs, and following large meetings and events. The reminder email should include a deadline (typically 30 days after travel is completed) by when all forms and documentation must be submitted to APS.
2.0 PROCESSING TRAVEL & EXPENSE REPORTS

2.1 PROGRAM STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES
Program staff will receive completed forms and supporting documentation from travelers requesting reimbursement. Upon receipt of completed forms, the program staff will:

1. Acknowledge within 1-2 business days that completed forms and documentation have been received and that staff will follow up, as necessary, with questions.

2. Print form, all pages of documentation provided, and email from traveler. If form is received by postal mail, stamp the receipt date on the form.
   - Maintain the email as a record of the date and time APS received the invoice, which establishes the start of the 30-day timeline from submission of form to payment. The email should be submitted to Accounting with form and other documentation to be maintained in the accounting files.

3. Review form for completeness.
   a. Ensure that all subtotals and totals have been calculated. Travelers should be asked to calculate and hand write on the form any subtotals and totals that the form does not automatically tabulate.
      - The form is designed to automatically calculate these figures, but that functionality does not always work if the form is embedded in a web browser window. It is best to download the form and open in Adobe.
   b. Check that form is signed and dated by traveler. If the form has not been signed and dated, program staff will contact traveler and request the form be signed and dated.
   c. Check that documentation of expenses accompanies form. If no documentation is provided, program staff will contact traveler and request documentation.
      - Acceptable documentation includes original receipts or scanned copies of receipts.
      - Program staff are not required to review each piece of documentation. Accounting will perform a detailed audit of documentation to ensure all required receipts have been submitted and will contact traveler if additional documentation is required.

4. Ensure traveler has not exceeded any budget limits in any category (transportation, lodging, etc.) or in total. If no limits are specified, use judgment to question costs that appear excessive.

5. Write appropriate project-specific company code, cost center, and accounting code in the General Ledger Distribution section on the bottom of the form. Refer to the Chart of Accounts for a complete listing of all available accounting codes by project.
   - The current version of the Chart of Accounts can be obtained from the APS Accounting Manager.

6. Check with appropriate program staff if travel expenses need to be tracked. If so, enter the total expense into the appropriate budget tracking spreadsheet.

7. Obtain appropriate signature and submit form and documentation to Accounting for final processing and payment.
2.2 ACCOUNTING STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES
Accounting staff will receive from program staff completed T&E forms and accompanying documentation. Upon receipt of completed forms, the accounting staff will:

1. Confirm that traveler claims no unallowable expenses. A list of Non-Reimbursable Expenditures can be found in the APS Federal Grant Procedures.

2. Notify traveler of any unallowable expenses claimed on form that will not be reimbursed. The program staff member will be copied on the email.

3. Check for complete and appropriate documentation of expenses.

4. Notify traveler of any deficiencies in documentation and request any additional documentation needed. The program staff member will be copied on the email.

5. Issue reimbursement check.

3.0 DISPUTE RESOLUTION
Should traveler dispute the final amount of the travel reimbursement:

1. Program or Accounting staff who are informed by a traveler that they do not agree with the amount of the reimbursement will work to resolve the dispute with the traveler.

2. If a resolution cannot be met, Program staff will elevate the dispute up to the next level of management.