



Guest Travel and Reimbursement Policy – Affiliates, Visitors, Speakers, and Focused Research Groups

Guest Travel	
Policy Topic	Policy
Flight Arrangements	Reimbursement Cap is as follows: • Up to \$600.00 USD for continental, including Canada, Mexico, Alaska, and Caribbean, participants; and • Up to \$1,400.00 USD dollars for intercontinental, including Hawaii, participants <u>All flights must:</u> 1. Be booked by a US carrier, or eligible non-US carrier in accordance with the Fly America Act* or one of the Open Skies Agreement exceptions; 2. Be booked at least 14 days in advance of the NITMB event/activity; 3. Be economy seating only; no reimbursement for additional upgrades will be approved for the following: preferred seating zones, additional legroom, “economy plus”, and/or priority boarding. Airlines branding of upgraded seating changes frequently, check before you purchase your flights. Reimbursement is only for economy seating. 4. Be a round-trip flight from your home or home institution to Chicago. If you have other business or personal travel that is being tacked on to any leg of your trip to/from Chicago, your flight/s will need prior approval - the cost must be allocated appropriately to the grant, the other business purpose, and/or personal purpose. Our duty to you, as a participant, is to get you from your home to Chicago and back home again. Other travel you book that occurs during your program participation or between your program participation is considered a personal cost. 5. Include no more than one bag of checked luggage per person per flight; and 6. Not be purchased with airline travel certificates or vouchers. *For a list of US carriers, please follow this link and click on the Cert Carrier List document link. Due to the nature of our grant, NITMB is only able to reimburse for flights booked in accordance with the Fly America Act or its exceptions.
Stay Duration	NITMB provides reimbursement for the duration of your approved visit or speaking engagement. If you plan on staying in Chicago longer than the NITMB activity the following applies: • Lodging: NITMB only provides a hotel room for your approved visit at NITMB, you will need to secure your own lodging for days outside of the approved visit. • Flights reimbursement: you will need to provide a PDF of a comparison flight with an arrival the day before the activity and departure the day



	after the activity demonstrating that the cost of a longer stay is not more expensive. This flight information will need to be gathered at minimum 14 days before the activity begins. • Travel: We are only able to reimburse your round-trip travel from your home or home institution to Chicago to participate in the program. Other travel occurring during your program participation or between your program participation is considered a personal cost. Visa: Please note, for those traveling to the US on any ESTA/WB/B-1 visa you will need to follow the purposes of your visa while in country, you are advised to follow the intent and dates on the invitation letter issued by NITMB.
Lodging/Hotel	• Hotel rooms are booked in advance by NITMB at no cost to the participant. NITMB does not reimburse other hotels, Airbnb's or similar lodging. • Participants are free to have their family share the standard hotel room booked by NITMB. If you need room upgrades, rollaway beds, or adjoining suites, you must contact the hotel directly to make those arrangements. Any extra occupancy fees or upgrade charges are the personal responsibility of the participant and must be paid directly to the hotel. NITMB cannot process reimbursements or provide refunds for any separate family accommodations, including alternative lodging such as Airbnb rentals. Our staff is dedicated to managing core workshop logistics and cannot assist with booking or modifying reservations for family accommodations.
Bus or Rail	• NITMB will reimburse the cost of round-trip economy/coach fare for alternative modes of transportation (e.g. buses or trains) to Chicago, up to the amount of a round-trip airline ticket from the same location or \$300, whichever is greater. • For bus and rail from departing from outside of Illinois, you will need to provide a screen shot or PDF documentation of a comparable round-trip airline ticket from the same location with your reimbursement submission. We highly recommend that you secure this documentation prior to traveling. • The bus and/or train receipt/ticket must show dates of travel, the company name, and a transaction receipt of the amount paid.
Rail – Class of Service	• Economy
Driving	• Driving with a personal vehicle to NITMB is automatically approved if the proposed route from your home to NITMB (875 N Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60611) is under 300 miles away and will be reimbursed at the current IRS rate (https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates). You will need to provide NITMB with a map showing your anticipated route with the mileage at least 14 days prior to the event. • If the route is over 300 miles away, provide (1) a map showing the



	anticipated route and (2) a screenshot of a comparable round trip economy flight for the same dates taken at least 14 days in advance. NITMB will likely not be able to fully reimburse the cost of driving if the cost of driving exceeds the cost of the example flight. You can send this request to reimbursements@nitmb.org. • Traveling with a personal vehicle to and from the airport to your home is also reimbursable. • Parking is reimbursable, only if driving has been approved. The reimbursement limit is \$40.00 a day for overnight parking and is subject up to the total amount of \$250.00 on all ground transportation costs.
Car Rental	• NITMB does not reimburse car rentals.
Medical Exceptions	• Requests for a change in cabin class for medical reasons must be approved by the National Science Foundation due to US federal award rules. A medical certificate or a signed, dated doctor's letter written on clinician letterhead will need to be provided to request approval. Please allow ample time for this process. Alternatively, you may book your flight in economy class and upgrade post purchase. In this case NITMB will reimburse the cost of the purchased economy flight cost up to the reimbursement cap, but NITMB cannot reimburse the cost of the upgrade.
Taxi and Rideshare Safety Notice	• Guests should use reputable transportation providers only by booking through official apps (e.g., Uber, Lyft, Curb) or using properly licensed taxis from designated taxi stands, particularly at airports and transit hubs where unsolicited ride offers should be declined. A receipt is required for reimbursement. Ensure the taxi meter is running and review the receipt for accuracy before leaving the vehicle.
Important: Charges resulting from taxi scams, fraudulent activity, or unauthorized transactions are not reimbursable. Guests are responsible for disputing fraudulent credit card charges directly with their card issuer.	

Expense Reimbursement	
Policy Topic	Policy
Submission Timeline	All reimbursement requests MUST be received within 30 days from the last date of travel. Expenses submitted more than 90 days after this date are not reimbursable.
Receipts	• Itemized receipts (e.g. flights, ground transportation) are required. Receipts must also show proof of payment, the last four digits of your credit card; if payment information is missing from the receipt, provide a copy of your redacted credit card bill showing the amount. • Helpful Hint: Consider capturing an image of every receipt at the point of purchase and attaching it to your expense reimbursement



	submission to prevent delay of your reimbursement.
Reimbursements U.S. Bank Accounts Foreign Bank Accounts	• Guests with U.S. bank accounts are paid via ACH or Zelle . • Guests with foreign bank accounts are paid via wire in USD or local currency. Outgoing wire expenses and local fees charged by your bank for incoming wires are a non-reimbursable expense.
Currency	• Report all expenses in the currency used to pay them. Your reimbursement will be processed and paid in US Dollars. If you paid in another currency we use OANDA to determine the conversion. Your reimbursement will be mailed directly to the address you provide on the reimbursement request form. Direct deposit can be facilitated with a personal email address linked with a US bank account. Upon request, wires in US Currency can be arranged for international travelers - please note, some intermediary banks may charge a fee which will be deducted from the reimbursement.
Receipt Threshold Cash Expenses Receipt Auditing Missing Receipts	• All expenses require an itemized receipt. • Expenses paid in cash still require an itemized receipt. It is preferred that all expenses are paid using a credit/debit card. • The audit team has the right to request receipts of any cash transactions for compliance purposes.
Meals	Meals are reimbursable at the gsa.gov rate.
Long-Term Visitors 9+ Days	Long-term visitors who stay with the NITMB for more than 9 days may request reimbursement for grocery items purchased instead of dining out at local restaurants. • Grocery receipts for food and non-alcoholic beverages are reimbursable in the range from \$50 to \$75 per day, depending upon the time of year. • Expenses for individual meals on these days count toward the above limit.
Miscellaneous	• In-flight wi-fi and hotel wi-fi are not reimbursable. • Purchase of over-the-counter medicine, prescription medicine, or personal items are non-reimbursable. • Purchase of data plan or Int'l sim card or hotspot device is non-reimbursable. • Entertainment costs are not reimbursable. • Alcohol is not reimbursable. • Poster printing is not reimbursable. • Travel insurance and Medical Insurance are non-reimbursable. NITMB strongly recommends that all visitors obtain adequate insurance coverage before arrival to protect against unexpected medical costs. The NITMB does not provide health insurance for visitors. • While in the city, non-event related transportation expenses are non-reimbursable. • Visa costs are not reimbursable.



Docusign	• After review of your receipts, we will send you a reimbursement request form via Docusign for signature, and, if needed, a W-9 form. Docusign emails are often miscategorized as spam; please remember to check your spam folder. You do not need a Docusign account to sign.
Formatting	• Please upload all documents as PDFs.
Reimbursement Link: https://www.nitmb.org/reimbursement/ Prior Approval Form: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/f5b16a8dac734564b1fd2a77c9892e7c	
Questions? Travel: Please reach out to your program's designated point of contact. Expenses: Please email reimbursements@nitmb.org with the name of your attended activity and your name in the subject line.	

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Prior Approval

When should I submit a Prior Approval Request?

Prior approval is required only for exceptional or nonstandard travel arrangements. Submit a request before making any purchase when your itinerary includes:

- Extended stays.
- Multi-city travel.
- A departure or return airport different from your home institution.
- Non-U.S. carriers.
- Travel outside standard program dates.
- Driving long distances instead of flying.
- Medical or accessibility accommodations.
- Any itinerary that exceeds reimbursement limits.

Prior approval is an exception review, not a reservation or guarantee of reimbursement.

Complete the Prior Approval Form before purchase and wait for a written decision. NITMB may approve, deny, limit, or place conditions on a request based on the invitation letter, available funding, cost comparisons, policy requirements, and applicable federal rules. A submitted or pending request is not approval. Costs purchased before written approval are at the traveler's own risk and may not be reimbursed.

How does the prior approval process work?

1. Submit the Prior Approval Form before purchase.



2. Include the complete proposed itinerary, a standard policy-compliant comparison, costs, and the reason for the exception.
3. NITMB reviews the request for policy compliance, allowability, funding, and any required federal approval.
4. Wait for a written decision. The decision may approve, deny, limit, or condition the request.
5. Book only after written approval and follow the approved itinerary and reimbursement limit. Changes require a new review.

Prior Approval Form: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/f5b16a8dac734564b1fd2a77c9892e7c>

What documentation should I include with my request?

Provide complete documentation that allows NITMB to compare the requested exception with standard, policy-compliant travel. Depending on the request, include:

- Flight comparisons.
- Screenshots or PDFs of alternate itineraries.
- Cost comparisons.
- Explanation of business or personal travel being combined with the NITMB trip.
- Supporting documentation required for a medical or accessibility exception.

Flights & Travel Dates

Can I arrive early or leave after the program ends?

Only in limited circumstances. Travel outside the approved program dates is considered nonstandard and must not be booked unless written prior approval is received. Approval is not automatic. The request must show that the exception is necessary or cost-effective and does not increase NITMB's reimbursable cost. Accept responsibility for booking and paying for your own lodging, meals, local transportation, and all other expenses outside the NITMB-covered dates unless the written approval expressly states otherwise.

Do I need approval if I want to stay longer for personal travel?

Yes. A personal extension is an exceptional, nonstandard itinerary and requires written prior approval before purchase. Approval is not guaranteed. NITMB will consider only the documented cost of standard round-trip travel directly related to program participation, subject to the invitation letter and reimbursement cap. Accept responsibility for booking and paying for your own lodging, meals, local transportation, and all other expenses outside the NITMB-covered dates unless the written approval expressly states otherwise.

Can I fly on dates that are cheaper than the standard arrival and departure dates?

Possibly, but only as an exception approved in writing before purchase. Lower airfare alone does not guarantee approval. Submit the requested itinerary and a standard-date comparison. NITMB may deny the request or limit reimbursement to the lower eligible amount. You are responsible for lodging and other expenses outside the approved program dates.



Can I upgrade to premium seating or business class if I pay the difference?

You may purchase an upgrade with personal funds only after the underlying itinerary complies with policy. NITMB can reimburse no more than the approved economy-equivalent airfare up to the cap. Premium seating or business-class costs are not reimbursable.

Multi-City and Nonstandard Itineraries

Can I travel to or from Chicago from a location other than my home airport?

Only with written prior approval. Travel from or to a location other than your home or home institution is nonstandard and will be reviewed as an exception. Submit a standard home-Chicago-home cost comparison and explain the business or personal travel being combined. NITMB may deny the request, limit reimbursement to the eligible program-related portion, require cost allocation, or impose other conditions. The flight cap still applies.

Can I combine NITMB travel with another business travel, such as a conference, workshop, seminar, or collaboration visit?

Only with written prior approval. Combining NITMB travel with another business purpose is an exception and is not automatically reimbursable. Submit a standard home-Chicago-home cost comparison and identify the other business purpose and funding source. NITMB may deny the request or reimburse only the documented portion attributable to NITMB, subject to the flight cap and any written conditions.

Can NITMB reimburse only one leg of my trip?

Possibly, but only if approved in writing before purchase. Submit a standard home-Chicago-home cost comparison and the complete proposed itinerary. NITMB may deny the request or limit reimbursement to the documented leg or amount directly attributable to program participation, subject to the flight cap.

Fly America Act & International Travel

<https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/travel-management-policy-overview/fly-america-act>

Can I use a non-U.S. airline?

Use of a non-U.S. carrier is not automatically permitted. Because NITMB travel is supported by U.S. federal awards, the itinerary must comply with the Fly America Act or a documented exception. Submit the Prior Approval Form before booking and wait for written approval. If approval is denied or not obtained before purchase, the airfare may be non-reimbursable.

What if a U.S. carrier is significantly more expensive or requires much longer travel times?

Submit a prior approval request before booking. Price or convenience alone does not qualify as a Fly America Act exception. The request will be reviewed against the applicable federal criteria, and approval is not guaranteed.



A non-U.S. carrier may be considered only when a documented Fly America Act or Open Skies exception applies, including the circumstances below. Meeting a listed circumstance does not by itself constitute NITMB approval; written approval is still required before purchase:

1. When a U.S. air carrier is not available.
2. When using a U.S. carrier service would extend the travel time by 24 hours or more.
3. When a U.S. carrier does not offer a nonstop or direct flight between origin and destination, and using a U.S. carrier:
 - Increases the number of aircraft changes outside the United States by two or more;
 - Extends travel time by six hours or more; or
 - Requires a connecting time of four hours or more at an overseas interchange point.
4. When the flight time from origin to destination is less than three hours and using a U.S. flag carrier doubles the flight time.
5. When there is an applicable [Open Skies Agreement](#) in effect that meets the requirements of the Fly America Act.

The exceptions provided by the Open Skies Agreements for government-funded travel do not apply if your transportation is funded by the Department of Defense.

Note: Ticket cost and convenience are NOT exceptions to the Fly America Act.

What if there are no direct flights from my city?

Use a policy-compliant connecting itinerary whenever reasonably available. Nearby-airport, rail-connection, or other nonstandard arrangements require prior approval when they differ from the standard itinerary. Submit the full itinerary and cost comparison before purchase and wait for a written decision.

Driving, Rail, and Ground Transportation

Can I drive instead of fly?

Driving under 300 miles is automatically approved only when the mileage documentation requirements are met. Driving over 300 miles is an exception requiring advance review and an airfare comparison. NITMB may deny the request or limit reimbursement to the applicable comparable airfare or other approved amount.

Can I travel by train or bus instead of flying?

Economy or coach bus and rail travel may be reimbursable within the stated policy limit. This is not approval for premium service or a nonstandard itinerary. Travelers departing from outside Illinois must retain comparable airfare documentation, and any itinerary that otherwise departs from policy requires written prior approval before purchase.

Hotels & Extended Stays

**Will NITMB pay for extra hotel nights if I arrive early or stay later?**

No. NITMB covers lodging only for the approved program period. Additional nights are personal expenses unless an exceptional need is specifically approved in writing before the stay. Submitting a request does not guarantee that additional lodging will be covered.

Medical Considerations

What if I have a medical condition that affects my travel plans?

Contact NITMB before booking so the request can be reviewed through the appropriate accommodation and approval process that requires approval by the National Science Foundation. Cabin-class changes for medical reasons require additional documentation and approval under federal award rules. Do not purchase a nonstandard arrangement until written approval is received. Requests for change in cabin class for medical reasons must be approved by the National Science Foundation due to US federal award rules. A medical certificate or a signed, dated doctor's letter written on clinician letterhead will need to be provided to request approval. NITMB cannot reimburse the cost of the upgrade. The flight cap still applies.