

POLICY NO: 12-08

TITLE OF POLICY:

TRAVEL POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE

To establish proper use of Boston VA Research Institute, Inc. (BVARI) funds in support of travel.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to any BVARI or VA Boston Healthcare System employee traveler anticipating use of BVARI funds for travel reimbursement.

3.0 POLICY

BVARI funds may only be used for travel in the following circumstances and must be approved prior to travel:

- Directly related to any BVARI-managed sponsored research or education award as allowed by sponsor and approved by VA (for VA employees); or
- Related to BVARI-approved business (e.g., travel to further the acquisition of resources, education, and/or training of BVARI faculty and staff).

Hotel, Meals, Incidentals, and Ground Transportation

"Reasonable" amounts for hotel accommodations as determined by the destination city and meeting site are allowed unless sponsored award terms otherwise restrict. The [U.S. General Services Administration \(GSA\) per diem rates](#) are considered reasonable. Exceptions may be considered when hotels are unavailable at the per diem rate or when the conference hotel rate differs.

Meals, incidentals, and ground transportation will be reimbursed following the [U.S. General Services Administration \(GSA\) per diem rates](#). Reimbursement will be adjusted based on meals provided to traveler during trip. Use of a rental car may be considered reimbursable with appropriate business justification.

Lowest Economy Class Airfare

Airfare other than lowest economy class (e.g., business or economy upgrade) is not allowable for BVARI business purposes unless justified and approved in advance.

Airfare other than lowest economy class is not allowable on federally-funded sponsored awards unless an exception is met, documented, and approved. Federal regulations (2 CFR §200.474.3(d)) require that airfare costs in excess of the lowest economy fare class are unallowable except when the latter would:

- Require circuitous routing;
- Require travel during unreasonable hours;
- Excessively prolong travel;
- Result in additional costs that would offset the transportation savings; or
- Offer accommodations not reasonably adequate for the traveler's medical needs.

Exceptions for business-class or upgraded economy airfare must meet one of these criteria and be justified and documented to be allowable on a federal award.

Foreign Travel

Foreign travel is generally restricted by sponsors and requires at least 30-60 days' advanced approval by the sponsor. [U.S. Department of State Foreign Per Diem Rates](#) typically apply. If expenditures are not incurred in U.S. Dollars, current currency conversion rates at the time of travel will apply.

Travelers are responsible for obtaining necessary visas or passports. [Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Financial Policy Volume XIV Travel, Chapter 6 International Travel](#) describes the requirements for VA employees.

Additional airfare requirements for foreign travel include the following:

Airfare under the Fly America Act

The Fly America Act is a federal regulation that states that any foreign air travel that is financed by federal funds must be booked on U.S. flag air carriers, regardless of cost or convenience when compared to foreign air carriers. Exceptions to the Fly America Act include:

- When the use of U.S. flag air carrier service would extend travel time (including delay at origin) by 24 hours or more;
- When the costs of transportation are reimbursed in full by a third party, such as a foreign government or an international agency; or
- When U.S. flag air carriers do not offer nonstop or direct service between origin and destination.

However, a U.S. flag air carrier must be used on every portion of the route where it provides service unless, when compared to using a foreign air carrier, such use would:

- Increase the number of aircraft changes outside the U.S. by two or more;
- Extend travel time by at least six hours or more; or
- Require a connecting time of four hours or more at an overseas interchange point.

Exceptions to the Fly America Act must meet one of the exception criteria and be justified and documented to be allowable on a federal award.

Code Share

Please note that code-sharing agreements with foreign air carriers, whereby U.S. flag air carriers purchase or have the right to sell a block of tickets on a foreign carrier, comply with the Fly America Act. The ticket, or documentation for an electronic ticket, must identify the U.S. carrier's designator code and flight number. However, some sponsored awards may not recognize code-sharing as being compliant with Fly America Act. When the specific sponsor policy is more restrictive than the Fly America Act, the more restrictive policy applies.

Private Automobile Use

Reimbursement for travel using the traveler's personal automobile will be made at the prevailing federal mileage reimbursement rate plus applicable tolls, but may not exceed lowest economy class airfare cost to destination.

Scientific Accoutrements

Scientific accoutrements purchased during travel, such as scientific books or professional society memberships may be purchased and included with the travel reimbursement request.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Code Share: Code sharing is a marketing arrangement in which an airline places its designator code on a flight operated by another airline, and sells tickets for that flight. New code-share relationships are continually being negotiated (see unofficial Code-Share Report [here](#)).

Lowest economy class airfare: Airfare sometimes referred to as coach, standard economy fare class or base airfare which includes a reserved seat, one personal item, one carry-on bag, and one checked bag

5.0 RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

5.1 Any traveler utilizing BVARI funds is responsible for adhering to this policy, completing and obtaining appropriate approvals and required documentation prior to travel.

5.2 BVARI Sponsored Programs Administration is responsible for the review and approval of all travel related to sponsored awards.

5.3 BVARI CEO, Finance, or Board of Directors designee is responsible for the review and approval of all travel related to BVARI business.

6.0 PROCEDURES

The ***BVARI Travel Authorization Request*** must be completed by all travelers prior to travel (generally at least 30 days prior to travel). A ***BVARI Travel Reimbursement Form*** should be submitted with all original receipts (or ***BVARI Missing Receipt Affidavit Form***) within 30 days upon completion of travel unless an exception is approved.

7.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- [BVARI Travel Reimbursement Form](#)
- [BVARI Travel Authorization Request](#)
- [BVARI Missing Receipt Affidavit Form](#)
- [Office of Personnel Management Form 71](#)
- VA Travel Orders (10-1017)

8.0 REVISION HISTORY

Revision Letter	Author	Revision Date	Description of Changes
A		01/29/2009	Original document
B	Jeffrey Burd	4/27/2012	Updated to reflect Canadian travel, Fly America act, some language clarification
C	Caitlin Crowley / Janyce Sarmaniote / Denise Moody	5/5/2021	- updated Fly America Act section - added Lowest Economy Class section - added definitions - removed reference to VHA Handbook 1400.06 which was rescinded - removed procedures which are already embedded within the forms