



## ECOS Travel Policy and Reimbursement Guidelines

### Travel Policy

Generally, ECOS meeting participants are expected to cover their own expenses. When ECOS has funding to support state participant travel, staff will convey that to travelers with information on any limitations beyond the standard reimbursement guidelines below. If you are unsure if funding is available to attend a meeting, please reach out to the ECOS staff coordinating the meeting for additional information.

### Travel Arrangements and Reimbursable Expenses

All ECOS-related meeting participants are responsible for making their own travel arrangements. With pre-approval when funding is available, ECOS will reimburse state participants for expenses that are directly attributable to attending the meeting. Such expenses are limited to:

- Airline/train fare, excluding any upgraded class of travel, pre-paid seat assignments, automatic check-in, a second checked bag, travel agency fees if not required by state agency, and travel insurance. ECOS does not impose restrictions on airlines you may use, but asks that you choose the least expensive option when similar choices are available;
- Cost of travel to/from the airport/train station at traveler's starting point (e.g., shuttle, taxi, airport parking);
- Hotel costs at the pre-approved rate. In cases where ECOS has established a special room block and meeting rate at or near the meeting location (or at an overflow hotel), those facilities must be used, and the lowest contracted rate will be the maximum amount of lodging costs reimbursable to an individual. Travelers will only be reimbursed for the number of travel days/hotel nights indicated in the ECOS preapproval of the event, or for the number of meeting days plus one if not specified in the preapproval. Should the traveler have an individual requirement for additional days/nights based on travel distance, inadequate flight schedules, etc., it is their responsibility to contact ECOS for prior approval. ECOS will not reimburse optional services, such as room service, wifi, telephone, pay-per-view TV;
- Cost of meals according to the federal government per diem reimbursement rules. Current rates for the specific location and time period are located at the government website: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. Participants will not be reimbursed for meals provided at the meeting. Meals on the first and last day of travel are reimbursed at 75% of the federal per diem rate regardless of travel time;
- Automobile transportation only when the vehicle is used to travel to the meeting location. If transportation exceeds 500 miles round-trip when a car is used as your personal preference, intent to drive should be noticed to ECOS so that reimbursement can be

calculated at the lowest applicable airfare. A rental car can be used only with advance approval from ECOS;

- Reasonable upgraded accommodations for any point of travel (i.e. on a plane or in a hotel) may be used due to a medical disability or special need. Reasonable accommodations can be accounted for only when there is no free, alternative means to accommodate the traveler's needs. In order to qualify for reimbursement, the disability or special need must be certified by a medical authority (i.e. a licensed medical practitioner) and approved by ECOS before the accommodation/upgrade is purchased.

A receipt for any expense \$25 and over must be submitted with the request for reimbursement, excluding per diem meal expenses.

### **Reimbursement Process**

All approved, reimbursable expenses must be itemized separately by date on the ECOS Travel Reimbursement Form provided by ECOS staff for the meeting in which you are claiming reimbursement. Please use only the form for the event you are attending; it contains a specific code for accounting purposes, the current per diem rate for that particular meeting location, and the current mileage rate. You must include receipts for all expenses over \$25. Be sure to sign the form to certify that the claim is correct. Email your completed form and documentation within 30 days of your last day of travel to the ECOS staff member who pre-approved your reimbursement eligibility.

Frequent recipients of ECOS travel reimbursement are encouraged to apply for paperless, electronic payment by completing ECOS' Authorization Agreement for Automatic Debits (ACH), available [here](#) .

### **Questions?**

ECOS encourages you to call the ECOS office with any questions you may have, especially if you encounter any unusual circumstances. Any ECOS staff member can assist you by phone or email, either directly or by referring your question to more appropriate staff for response. All staff contact information is available on <https://www.ecos.org/about-ecos/our-staff/>, or call our main line at 202-266-4920.