Project Participant
Travel Expense Policy
Canada's Ocean Supercluster

As of 03 March 2026

1. Objectives and Scope

1.1. General

This policy establishes processes and procedures to be followed with respect to the eligibility, authorization, approval and reimbursement of travel expenses incurred by Project Participants. Project Participants are defined as sole proprietors, partnerships, corporations, research institutions or other entities approved for funding by Canada's Ocean Supercluster (OSC) while carrying out their respective responsibilities on projects approved and contracted with the OSC.

1.2. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- ensure that Project Participants have a clear and consistent view of eligible travel expense policies and procedures,
- provide guidance on what is and what is not a permitted travel expense,
- help the Project Participant understand their responsibility to control and report travel expenses,
- ensure that all expenditures comply with applicable sales tax rules, and
- ensure that all expenditures comply with the OSC Project Agreement.

1.3. Scope

This policy applies to all people for whom the Project Participant is submitting a claim for Eligible Project Costs for travel expenses incurred. This policy applies to staff, contractors, and any project partners on behalf of which the Project Participant is making a claim or reconciliation.

2. General Travel and Expense Policy

2.1. Guiding principles for travel expenses:

- Travel expenses should be appropriate, economical and reasonable.
- International travel should be carefully assessed to ensure it is consistent with project objectives as articulated in the Project Agreement
- Marketing-related travel costs require pre-approval by the OSC.
- No more than two conferences per year per project participant, with no more than four participants, should be included in the project budget; justification for attendance must be provided.

2.2. Claiming travel expenses

Project Participants can claim Eligible Project Costs incurred while carrying out their respective project responsibilities as referenced in Section 1.1 and in accordance with the guidelines of the Canadian Federal Government National Joint Council Travel Directive (NJC-TD), which can be found here: Travel Directive

Reimbursable travel expenses must be supported by documentation that adheres to this policy (see section 4). It is the responsibility of the Project Participant to ensure its staff, contractors, and project partners adhere to this policy when incurring expenditures for which reimbursement is sought from the OSC. It is the responsibility of the Project Participant to be familiar with the reasons for the expenditures and be satisfied that the travel expenses being claimed are Eligible Project Costs.

Travel expenses are only Eligible Project Costs if they are incremental expenses and adhere to the terms and conditions of this policy and the OSC Project Agreement. Travel expenses must be incurred and paid by the Project Participant within the claim period.

3. Travel Expenses and Procedures

3.1. Air Travel

3.1.1 Within Canada and International

The standard for air travel is economy class. The lowest available airfares shall be sought, and bookings shall be made as far in advance as possible.

3.1.2 Airline Upgrades and preferred seating

Airline upgrades are acceptable if there is no additional expense to OSC. Upgraded tickets or preferred seats purchased by cash or points are not considered Eligible Project Costs. Selection fees for standard seats on commercial, private and/or chartered carriers are Eligible Project Costs.

3.1.3 Baggage

One (1) checked bag per flight is an Eligible Project Cost. All other checked bags are at the expense of the employee and are considered ineligible by the OSC.

3.1.4 Unused Tickets and Refunds

Overpayments, namely amounts reimbursed or paid to employees, which are not in accordance with the terms of this policy, shall be recovered from the employee as a debt owing to the Project Participant or applied to future business travel. This will be the responsibility of the Project Participant to manage and recover.

3.1.5 Travel to and from Airport

The cost of transportation to and from an airport when using a taxi or when claiming at the defined kilometric rate when using a personal vehicle are Eligible Project Costs. Parking charges shall be considered eligible where it is practical and economical to leave a private vehicle at the public carrier's terminal during the period of absence.

3.2. Rental Vehicles

The standard for rental vehicles is intermediate. Rental vehicles beyond this standard shall be authorized based upon factors such as, but not limited to, safety, the number of people sharing the vehicle, the traveller's needs and the bulk or weight of goods transported. Support must be provided by the Project Participant to demonstrate a higher standard than Intermediate. If valid support is not provided, the entire expense will not be considered an Eligible Project cost.

- When authorized by the Project Participant, the rental cost for GPS shall be considered an Eligible Project Cost.
- Additional costs associated with the provision of winter tires on rental vehicles shall be considered Eligible.
- Expenses related to parking tickets, speeding or other violations are ineligible costs.

3.3. Use of personal vehicles

When using a privately leased or owned automobile to travel to an out-of-town location, the actual kilometres incurred and reimbursed by the Project Participant are an Eligible Project Cost. The OSC follows the National Joint Council Travel Directive (NJC) for maximum allowable rates for kilometres travelled. The OSC recommends that claimants use these rates, adjusted for sales taxes, to reimburse their employees for their travel expenses. Using these rates will simplify and streamline the claim review process. If these rates are not used to reimburse employees, the OSC will reimburse the lower of the rates reimbursed to employees and the NJC rates.

Rates for North America are based on the NJC-TD guidelines: (NJC Kilometre Rates). The Project Participant is responsible for sourcing the most up-to-date rates from the travel directive.

If an employee of a Project Participant chooses to use a privately-owned vehicle rather than travel by air, or vice versa, the lower cost of the two modes of transportation will be reimbursed. The distance travelled is calculated from the employee's home to the destination.

OSC assumes no financial responsibility for privately owned vehicles and deductible amounts related to insurance coverage are ineligible. Privately owned vehicles used for business travel shall, as a minimum, have basic insurance coverage, including the minimum Public Liability and Property Damage coverage required by the province/territory of registration of the vehicle. Any additional premium costs necessary to increase private vehicle insurance coverage to the basic level are not eligible project costs, including lowering deductibles.

- Expenses incurred for repairs to personal vehicles are ineligible project costs, even if these repairs came to light following a business trip.

- Expenses related to parking tickets, speeding or other violations are ineligible costs.
- The Project Participant is responsible for confirming that other passengers travelling in the vehicle are covered by the insurance policy used when booking travel.

3.4. Rail Travel

All the guidelines concerning air transport also apply to rail transport (rates, classes, insurance, etc.), see Section 3.1.

3.5. Accommodations

3.5.1 Hotels

The standard for accommodation is a single room in a safe environment, conveniently located and comfortably equipped. Travellers should use existing Project Participant corporate rates; otherwise, the lowest room rate should be used, if available, for booking. Travellers are expected to follow the rate guidance supplied by Public Service and Procurement Canada, found at Canadian Government Accommodations and Car Rental Directory. Note the rates listed at this link are nightly rates and do not include sales taxes or room levy fees. OSC will reimburse the lower of the actual rate paid or the posted allowance per the link above.

If travel plans change, and accommodation is no longer required, the Project Participant is responsible for ensuring the reservation is cancelled within the hotel's cancellation policy, if possible. Regardless, proof of cancellation should be obtained.

3.5.2 Private Residence

The allowance considered an eligible project cost for stays at a private residence when travelling is to a maximum of $50.00 per night as per the NJC-TD guidelines and is subject to change in accordance with the guidelines.

3.6. International Travel

This section includes only those provisions that are unique to travel outside Canada. The balance of the general policies also applies to these travel situations.

As stated in 2.1 above, it is expected that Project Participants ensure that any international travel that is undertaken is directly related to project objectives and that similar benefits could not be obtained through either travel within Canada or virtual meetings.

Claims to the OSC are processed in Canadian funds. Travel receipts must be converted to Canadian dollars showing the conversion rate on the receipt, citing the source and date of the conversion rate used, and then reported on the Travel tab of the OSC Detailed Claim and Reconciliation Form.

The cost of a mobile phone roaming package is an eligible project cost, however, costs for overages relating to the roaming package or roaming charges incurred because of not obtaining a roaming package are ineligible.

3.7. Parking and Tolls

Parking when travelling on business is an eligible project cost. Fines for overtime parking or other violations are ineligible.

Charges for bridges, ferries and causeway tolls are eligible project costs.

3.8. Travel and Credit Card Usage

Fees or deposits for maintaining a personal credit card or any interest or surcharges are considered ineligible costs.

4. OSC Claim Reports

Refer to OSC Cost Eligibility Guidelines for claim-related guidance surrounding submitting travel costs.

Specific items to note with respect to completing the travel expenses tab of the OSC Detailed Claim and Reconciliation Form:

- Invoice details must include the dates of the trips, the name of the traveller(s), and separate breakdown of sales taxes
- Canadian sales taxes (HST, GST, PST and QST) must be excluded from all amounts
- Copies of all invoices for travel costs that are $500 and greater must be submitted, even if the invoice is split between several rows or categories on the expense claim
- Approved expense claim submitted by employees or subcontractors must be submitted with the travel invoices
- Travel costs must be incurred and paid by the Project Participant. They are not considered eligible costs if they are recorded against a shareholder’s account or deferred for future payment/ reimbursement
- One day of travel and costs per line (i.e. Employee took a taxi and stayed in a hotel on the same day so both receipts would be entered on one line under the appropriate category)
- Use an addition formula in a cell if there are multiple receipts in one cell (i.e. 56.30+44) so that OSC can more easily reconcile the amounts entered to the receipts.
- A thorough description of the purpose of the trip and alignment to project objectives should be provided.
- The dates of travel entered must align to the invoices and receipts provided.

5. Travel Policy Review

The OSC will review this policy at a minimum on an annual basis so that the policy continues to be sufficient, appropriate and in line with the Canadian Federal Government National Joint Council Travel Directive (NJC Travel Directive).

6. Key Updates

Effective January 1, 2025:

- Meal and incidental costs are no longer eligible project costs; any of these costs incurred and paid after this date are ineligible for reimbursement.
- For accommodation costs: OSC will accept the lesser of the nightly rate paid and the nightly rate from the Canadian Government Accommodations and Car Rental Directory.
- Expense reports are required as supporting documentation for all travel costs claimed.