

Innovator's Travel Guide

This Travel Guide ("Guide") is a resource for Innovators working on Grand Challenges Canada- ("GCC") funded projects to ensure compliance with [GCC's Travel Policy](#). GCC is committed to the efficient and effective use of funds that it receives from the Government of Canada and other public and philanthropic funders. Innovators should review GCC's Travel Policy and this Guide before travelling for GCC project purposes.

GCC reviews each Innovator's travel policy and provides guidance, as part of GCC's pre-funding due diligence and organizational capacity-building exercise. If Innovators do not have a travel policy in place, a milestone is included in the Innovator's funding agreement to develop such a policy, as part of the financial reporting requirements. GCC provides support to the innovators in developing the travel policy, if required.

This Guide and GCC's Travel Policy outline the minimum requirements for Travel expenses. Innovators are not required to use the GCC Travel Policy and Guide as long as their travel policy and guidelines meet or exceed the requirements outlined in GCC's Travel policy, as determined during pre-funding due diligence procedures.

Guiding Principles behind GCC Travel Best Practices

- Facilitate travel in support of GCC's mission, while maintaining effective controls and promoting accountability.
- Ensure that Innovators who travel on GCC-related business can do so in a manner that is safe, secure, comfortable, cost effective and timely.
- Provide clear, transparent, and fair guidelines to manage and properly document business-related travel expenses.

Eligible Travel Costs

All travel must be undertaken during the GCC project period for related costs to be eligible.

Travel costs should be reported to GCC along with other project expenses in the Innovator's Financial Reports and General Ledger. Documentation should be retained in case of audit but does not need to be uploaded alongside financial reports.

a. Transportation

i. Air

The standard for air travel is economy class. If travel requires an overnight stay, the lowest airfare to be used as a benchmark should include the cost of one (1) checked bag. The [lowest available airfares for reasonable itineraries](#) are eligible for reimbursement and should be sought, and bookings should be made as far in advance as possible. Airplane ticket reimbursement is limited to the lowest reasonable fare available at the time of reservation, even when the traveler chooses not to use this fare.

The cost of necessary flight changes or cancellations due to business emergencies, travel restrictions or other circumstances beyond the traveler's control is considered a legitimate reimbursable expense, and the traveler must document the circumstances surrounding these changes. Exceptions to this policy to accommodate traveller health conditions require

pre-approval from GCC, please reach out to your deal lead with details of the medical necessity in advance of booking.

The traveler must save supporting documentation showing the three lowest-fare options available at the time of reservation, as well as the actual fare chosen. Other required documentation includes copies of all boarding passes, flight invoices and proof of payment.

Personal Upgrades: Personal miles or coupons can be used to upgrade to the next class of service, including premium economy or business class, or a traveler may opt to pay personally for the price difference to upgrade to the next classes or service. Documentation (emails from the travel agent and/or screenshots of the travel website) of the fare differentials from economy class to final booking must be clear, specific and included with the receipts by the traveler.

Air Mileage Programs: Use of personally preferred, frequent flyer upgrades will be the traveler's responsibility. GCC will not reimburse any costs associated with these upgrades. Travelers are responsible for managing their air mile accounts, as GCC's Travel Policy does not cover this. GCC is unable to reimburse for frequent flyer miles or other ancillary benefits.

ii. Other Forms of Transportation

Other forms of transportation are eligible for reimbursement by GCC in accordance with the allowances of the National Joint Council (NJC) Travel Directive found at <https://www.njc-cnm.gc.ca/directive/d10/en>. The standard for rail travel is the next highest class after the full economy class.

Taxis, rideshares, shuttles, and local transportation services are viable options for short trips. The actual cost of a short trip, including a small amount of reasonable gratuity, shall be reimbursed based on actual payments made by the traveler. Proof of payment (receipts) are only required for travel expenses in excess of CAD \$12.00.

Rental vehicles: The standard for rental vehicles is intermediate. Rental vehicles beyond the standard shall be authorized based upon factors such as, but not limited to, safety, the needs of the traveler and the bulk or weight of goods transported. Additional costs associated with the provision of winter tires on rental vehicles shall be reimbursed. In the event that it is not possible or practical to attend a rental facility the day that travel begins, rental vehicles may be authorized to be picked up the day prior to travel.

Fuel costs for the use of privately owned vehicles driven for project activities can also be reimbursed. Evidence of the distances actually driven are required. Travellers who intend to carry passengers are advised to confirm with their insurance agent that they are adequately insured. Rate(s) can be found: [Appendix B – Kilometric Rates – Modules 1, 2 and 3](#) of the NJC Directive.

b. Processing Fees for Visas

Costs incurred to obtain required travel visas are eligible for reimbursement. These costs can include visa processing fees, photographs and courier services. Please note that visa fees do not cover the cost of flying to another city and staying in a hotel to obtain the visa, unless appointments at local consulate offices of the countries being visited are not available. The cost of attaining or renewing a passport and related travel costs are ineligible.

GCC does not provide support with obtaining a visa. Travelers are responsible for arranging their own visas as required.

c. Accommodation

A variety of options for accommodation are available for travel. These include hotels, motels, corporate residences, apartments, government and institutional accommodation, and private non-commercial accommodation.

The actual and reasonable cost of a single room in commercial accommodation in a safe environment, conveniently located and comfortably equipped, is the standard for commercial accommodation. Exceptions are allowed under certain conditions related to safety, travel time and availability of rooms due to increased demand, which requires booking a hotel that is more expensive than the reasonable rate guidance. A guide to the actual and reasonable cost of accommodation for can be found here, see 'City Rate Limit': <https://rehelv-acrd.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/preface-eng.aspx#allcityratelimits>.

Although travelers generally stay in commercial accommodation, private non-commercial accommodation is encouraged. Such accommodation will be reimbursed at the rate(s) indicated in the Directive found in Appendix C and D of the [NJC Travel Directive](#).

Appendix C (US and Canada): <https://www.njc-cnm.gc.ca/directive/d10/v325/s978/en>

Appendix D (International): https://www.njc-cnm.gc.ca/directive/app_d.php?lang=en

d. Meals

The cost of meals is an eligible expense for reimbursement, in accordance with the meal allowances rate(s) indicated in Appendix C and D of the [NJC Travel Directive](#).

Travelers may claim the relevant per diem rather than submit actual expenses and receipts for every meal. Only when a daily meal allowance is not set out in the Directive for the particular travel location will receipts be required for all actual and reasonable meal expenses.

If meals are included in accommodation rates, per diems for those meals cannot be claimed.

e. Incidentals

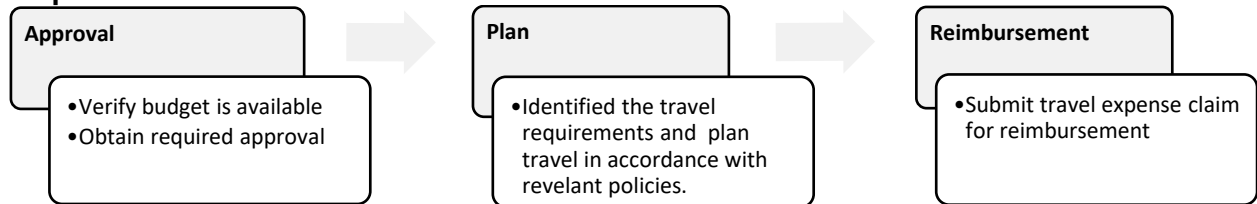
The Incidental Amount allowance is provided to cover the costs of items that can be attributed to a period in travel but are not covered through other reimbursements (meals, accommodation, or transportation) and includes items such as gratuities, business centre expenses, bottled water, phone calls home, Internet, e-sims and laundry. Incidentals are eligible for overnight travel only. Incidentals are not eligible where the traveler is returning on the same day. Incidental Amount Allowances are eligible for reimbursement, in accordance with the allowances rate(s) indicated in Appendix C and D of the [NJC Travel Directive](#).

f. Travel Insurance and Vaccinations

Innovators are responsible for ensuring that they have the necessary travel insurance, medication and vaccinations required to travel, based on country-specific advisories and requirements. Please refer to the specific cost directive for the GCC project to determine if these expenses are eligible for reimbursement.

Recommendations for Innovator Travel Policies

Steps



1. APPROVAL

All travel expenses require approval from the appropriate budget-holder or the direct manager of the traveler within your organization. It is both the traveler's and the approver's responsibility to ensure that the travel is required, reasonable in the context of project activities and in accordance with the applicable travel policies.

It is recommended for the traveler to request written approval before committing any funds for the trip. There must be an approved budget for travel expenses, and these must adhere to the terms and conditions stipulated in the funding agreement.

2. PLAN

Innovators can make their own travel arrangements through airlines, online travel sites or other travel agencies, in accordance with GCC's Travel Policy and specific guidelines noted above.

a. Mode of Transportation

The selection of the mode of transportation shall be based on cost, duration, convenience, safety and practicality. Travelers are encouraged to book as far in advance as is reasonable, to take advantage of travel discounts.

b. Travel Safety

Travelers should email a copy of their itinerary to their managers, including full flight details, hotel names and phone numbers, daily schedule, and name, email, and phone number or local business contact.

3. REIMBURSEMENT

Travelers are encouraged to submit their expense claims as soon as possible after the end of the trip. Travelers will need to support all expenses with original receipts, except for meal expenses when using the daily allowance and expenses under CAD \$12.00. Only when a daily meal allowance is not set out in the Directive for the particular travel location will receipts be required for all actual and reasonable meal expenses. If air travel was required for the trip, boarding passes must be submitted with the expense claim, even if GCC is not reimbursing the flight cost.

Receipts should indicate the purpose of the expense, the date and the location. Where the nature or reason for the expense is not self-evident, a description of the reason for the expense should be included on the receipt.

Innovators should have a travel reimbursement process in place, where travelers are required to:

1. Complete and sign expense claim form and attach original receipts
2. Obtain approval
3. Organization processes reimbursement
4. Traveler receives payment.

Travel Advances: If travel advances are provided to employees to facilitate travel bookings, documentation of the advance, expenditure and refund of unused funds to the Organization should be documented.

GCC is here to support Innovators and their team(s) in achieving these guidelines. Please reach out to your primary contact if you need support.

Last Updated: March 2026