

MSE Expense Report Guidelines

Last Updated: 3/20/24

- All Expense Reports should be submitted to MSEReimbursements@northwestern.edu
- Please refer to the MSE Resource Center to find all related information including guidelines, best practices, policies, forms, & job aides for properly submitting your reimbursement.

HOW TO CREATE AN EXPENSE REPORT:

- Individuals who are paid regularly by the University are able to create their own expense reports using the NUFinancials system. MSE staff is here to assist you with your reimbursement/expense report submissions.
- Those without NUFinancials access, MSE staff can help you with submitting a Visitor's Expense Report
 - undergraduates, visiting scholars/predocs/postdocs, or externally funded grad students
- Please review [How to Create an Expense in NUFinancials on page 6](#) for step-by-step instructions on preparing expense reports in NUFinancials. If you receive errors or have questions when creating an expense report, please contact MSE.

Items Needed for a Complete Expense Report:

Please email your Expense Report & supporting documentation to MSE staff, who will review your materials and submit your reimbursement on your behalf. Do your best to only send complete submissions for review.

- P) 7- that you created in NUFinancials
- PI approval for travel conference purchase and chart string(s)
- # [MSE Travel Reimbursement Cover Page](#) (see page 5)
- Supporting Documentation which includes:
 - Scanned receipts
 - Vy # # & additional documentation (described below)

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Please submit expense reports to MSE **within 30 days** of your return date. Expense reports submitted to MSE Reimbursements staff more than 30 days from the last travel expense date should include a) - 7 filled out to the best of your ability.

EXPENSE TYPES BREAKDOWN

TRANSPORTATION

- Airfare
 - Receipt: provide your e-ticket receipt showing all charges
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Airfare
 - Notes:
 - You may utilize Egencia to pre-pay for your flight instead of incurring out of pocket expenses – contact MSE for more details
 - Baggage Fees – select Domestic or Foreign Airfare as the expense type
- Ground Transportation -taxi, Lyft, Uber, train, car rental
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Public Ground Transportation
 - Receipt: provide email receipt printout, tickets, or individual receipts
 - Write a description on the receipt *i.e. taxi from hotel to airport*
 - Car rentals – Please visit NU Travel Site regarding partnerships & discounts available.
 - Northwestern will not reimburse for insurance, pre-paid gas, GPS, or other additional expenses
- Personal Vehicle Use
 - Expense Type: Domestic Private Auto Mileage
 - Receipt: provide Google Maps printout showing route origin, destination, and mileage
 - Parking – select Domestic Tolls & Parking as the expense type

HOTEL/LODGING

- Hotel
 - Receipt: provide final receipt showing number of nights and total amount paid
 - Confirmation of hotel booking is not acceptable
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Hotel/Motel
 - Notes:
 - If there are incidental expenses on the hotel receipt (i.e. internet fees, meals, etc.), those expenses must be separated from the hotel expenses and added as individual lines with their own unique expense type (Domestic or Foreign Incidentals)
- **Shared Hotel Rooms**
 - If you cannot pay for your own portion of the hotel room separately at time of check-out, MSE will reimburse the person who paid for the entire hotel bill.
 - The individual who paid the entire bill should include:
 - Hotel receipt
 - Names of each person who stayed in the hotel room
 - Chart strings for each person who stayed in the hotel room
 - Include Justification on the **MSE Travel Reimbursement Cover Page** (see page 5)

MEALS

- Restaurants/itemized receipts
 - Receipt: MUST provide itemized receipt for meal
 - Tips are reimbursable – submit the final itemized receipt including the tip
 - If you lose the itemized receipt
 - Submit a Non-itemized/Lost Receipt Form for expenses under \$40.
 - *one form per expense-think of it as a replacement receipt-do not list multiple expenses on one form*
 - For expenses GREATER THAN \$40, you'll need to complete an Exception form (*top section of the 90-day exception form*)
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Breakfast, Lunch, or Dinner
 - Notes:
 - Only pay for your portion of the meal. **Do not pay for other traveler's meals.**
 - If meals are included in the registration fee, you will not be reimbursed for outside meals
- Per Diem
 - ****Must be approved by your PI via email prior to your trip****
 - *Include Per diem approval just like chart string approval with the supporting documents as PDF attachment*
 - Meal Receipts not required
 - Instead of receipts, provide a printout of your destination's per diem rate
 - <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Per Diem
 - Notes:
 - Create individual lines in your expense report for each day of your trip- DO NOT COMBINE.
 - Reimbursement rates:
 - First and last days: 75% per diem rate per day
 - Remaining days of trip: up to 100% per diem rate per day
 - You need to prorate your per diem allowance if meals were included as part of the conference registration fee

o PER DIEM EXAMPLE:	-->	You went to LA for 4 days to present at a conference
Steps for How to Document properly with your Expense Report	-->	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Look up the GSA per diem rate2. Screenshot per diem page<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Includes Location, date, M&I total, first & last day amounts

Meals & Incidentals (M&IE) Breakdown ⁱ



Use this table to find the following information for federal employee travel:

M&IE Total - the full daily amount received for a single calendar day of travel when that day is neither the first nor last day of travel.

Breakfast, lunch, dinner, incidentals - Separate amounts for meals and incidentals. M&IE Total = Breakfast + Lunch + Dinner + Incidentals. Sometimes meal amounts must be deducted from trip voucher. See [More Information](#)

First & last day of travel - amount received on the first and last day of travel and equals 75% of total M&IE.

Filter Results...

Primary Destination ⁱ	County ⁱ	M&IE Total	Continental Breakfast/Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidental Expenses	First & Last Day of Travel ⁱ
Los Angeles	Los Angeles / Orange / Ventura / Edwards AFB less the city of Santa Monica	\$66	\$16	\$17	\$28	\$5	\$49.50

- The full rate is \$66/day, first/last day rate is \$49.50/day

3. Include screenshot PDF in your bundle of supporting documents to submit with expense report upon returning from trip.

- Day 1: \$49.50
- Day 2: \$66
- Day 3: \$66
- Day 4: \$49.50

FOREIGN TRAVEL

- Foreign Airfare
 - If you're traveling internationally, be sure to visit the NU Travel Site pages & McCormick pages regarding foreign travel policies. Reach out to MSE Reimbursements staff to review your travel needs should you have further questions about foreign expense reimbursement requirements.
 - **Foreign-based airline carriers are restricted on grants.**
 - Select a US airline carrier when using grant funds to purchase flights
 - It does not matter if a foreign-based carrier is less expensive
 - Please see the [Fly America Act](#) for more information or *ask MSE for help*
 - If code sharing, your payment must ultimately go to the US carrier, meaning your ticket must be issued by the US carrier, not the foreign carrier
 - **If you book incorrectly, you run the risk of not being reimbursed**
 - Business, First, or Premium Economy Class for travel less than 12 hours will not be reimbursed
 - including layovers and flight changes
- ALL Foreign Transactions
 - Include a foreign currency conversion for every expense incurred in foreign currency
 - All expenses listed in NUFInancials should be in **US Dollars**
 - Make the conversion -- Use the Oanda Currency Converter
 - Best sure to change the date of expense to reflect each individual conversion
- Foreign Per Diem
 - Instead of the GSA Guidelines for Per Diem printout, you will find International Per Diem maximum amounts on the Secretary of State website.

Traveling to a Conference/Professional Meeting

- If you are traveling to attend a conference or a professional meeting, you MUST include:
 - a printout of the conference agenda, including times when meals were provided
 - a copy of your conference ID badge, abstract, Certificate of attendance
- If your **conference registration was prepaid by Department staff on a NU Corporate Card** or an outside source, the documentation above is still required to be submitted with your expense report.
- If you booked **hotel or airfare accommodations using Egencia** or similar travel partner sites, these receipts & confirmations are also required as part of the expense report.

Traveling to Argonne for the day for beam time:

- Site visit transportation cost are reimbursable
- Follow the Transportation guidelines for documentation
- Include a printout showing your scheduled beam time
 - Log into My APS Portal
 - Click My ESAFS
 - Click Generate Report
 - Print the report to PDF

• Traveling to Argonne and staying overnight:

- You can be reimbursed for: transportation, meals, and lodging costs (guest house)
 - Avoid in-town meals - *not reimbursable!*
 - See **Transportation, Meals, and Lodging** sections above for documentation
- Include PDF of printout showing your scheduled beam time (see above)

MIXING PERSONAL & BUSINESS TRAVEL

- If you extend your trip duration for personal reasons, you MUST provide a flight comparison with your expense report. *Expenses submitted without the flight comparison are not guaranteed reimbursement!*
- The flight comparison MUST show the exact dates and locations as if you only traveled for business
 - This means you need to perform the flight comparison **PRIOR** to your departure date
- You will only be reimbursed for the portion of airfare that is business related (i.e. amount of the flight comparison) as well as for meals during the portion of your trip that is business related
- Example flight comparison:
 - *You are going to LA to present at a conference. The conference is July 15-18. You extend your trip duration to take a vacation, so instead you travel July 15-23.*
 - *You need to provide your flight receipt for July 15-23 showing the actual amount that you paid (example: \$600)*
 - *You need to provide a flight comparison for the exact dates you would have traveled for business (July 14-18)*
 - *Your flight comparison will show the total amount it would have cost to travel for business only (example: \$500)*
 - *In this example, you will be reimbursed \$500 and will need to pay \$100 out-of-pocket.*

Multi-Purpose Business Travel

- If you have a trip that is all business but multi-purpose (for multiple projects), you MUST provide a flight comparison with your expense report in order to split expenses between different sources of funding.
- The flight comparison MUST show the exact dates and locations as if you traveled separately for each business purpose.
- Example flight comparison:
 - *You are flying from Chicago to Geneva for a DOE conference, driving to Zurich to attend an NSF meeting, then flying from Zurich back to Chicago*
 - *You need to provide your flight receipt showing the actual amount paid*
 - *You need to provide TWO flight comparisons: one round trip to Geneva for dates specific to the DOE conference and one round trip to Zurich for dates specific to the NSF meeting*
 - *MSE staff will use the comparisons to allocate the correct percentages of the actual amount paid to the DOE and NSF chart strings*

Exceptions/Other Reimbursements

- Student Groups
 - Must obtain approval from department BA prior to event/meeting
 - Present the anticipated list of attendees (RSVP list) alongside the proposed order/request
 - Taxes will not be reimbursed
 - Acquire a one-time-use tax exemption letter to provide vendor at time of purchase when requesting Department approval
 - Following the event/meeting - submit the following to MSEReimbursements@northwestern.edu
 - Provide itemized receipt, list of attendees, event flyer or Meeting agenda, re-attach the pre-approval
- Miscellaneous Purchases approved for Reimbursement
 - All purchasing must be submitted through the proper channels within the university. All purchase requests for MSE should be routed through MSEPurchasing@northwestern.edu.
 - Taxes will not be reimbursed - One-time tax exemption letters can be obtained through the MSE office.

MSE Travel Reimbursements Cover Page

Please include this page with your supporting documents when submitting your expense report to MSEReimbursements@northwestern.edu in 1 single PDF file.

TRIP INFORMATION

Traveler:		Dates of Entire Trip:	
Destination(s):			
Business Purpose:	Please provide a thorough business purpose explaining what this reimbursement is for and why it relates to this chart string/grant. <i>Example: Reimbursement for attending the 2019 MRS conference to present my research about developing materials for energy storage. The DOE grant is funding this reimbursement and the grant's purpose is to develop materials for energy storage.</i>		
Chart String(s) for Traveler:			
If multiple chart strings are being used, provide a justification for how you are splitting the cost:			

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE PERSONAL TRAVEL?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes:

Dates of Business Travel:		Dates of Personal Travel:	
Business Destination(s):		Personal Destination(s):	
If personal travel was involved, you must provide a flight comparison. The flight comparison must be prepared prior to your departure date. Without a flight comparison, you will not be reimbursed for your airfare. Please ask MSE staff for help if needed.			

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE MULTI-PURPOSE BUSINESS TRAVEL?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes:

Dates of Destination 1:		Dates of Destination 2:	
Business Destination 1:		Business Destination 2:	
If multi-purpose business travel was involved, you must provide flight comparisons. The flight comparisons must be prepared prior to your departure date. Without a flight comparison, you will not be reimbursed for your airfare. Please ask MSE staff for help if needed.			

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE FOREIGN TRAVEL?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*See the **Foreign Travel** section of the [MSE Expense Report Guidelines](#) for restrictions and details.

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE A CONFERENCE OR PROFESSIONAL MEETING?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*See the **Traveling to a Conference/Professional Meeting** section of the [MSE Expense Report Guidelines](#) for supporting documentation requirements and best practices.

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE A SHARED HOTEL ROOM?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Were you the traveler who paid for the room? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Fill out the chart below & MSE Reimbursements Staff will list the shared room expenses for you properly:

List all who Shared the room	Chart String to be charged	Justification for Sponsored Chart Strings

How to Create an Expense Report in NUFinancials

Step 1: CREATE EXPENSE REPORT

- Log into [NUFinancials](#)
- Select "Create Expense Report"

Step 2: SUMMARY PAGE - "GENERAL INFORMATION "

- Business Purpose:
 - Choose the most appropriate option from the drop-down menu
- Description:
 - Enter the name of the conference/meeting
 - *Ex: MRS Spring 2023 Conference - Boston*
- Default Location:
 - **DO NOT USE - leave blank**
- Reference:
 - **DO NOT USE - leave blank**
- Expenses Supervisor:
 - Click on the magnifying glass
 - Select your current supervisor
 - This is typically going to be the "0" record.
 - You may only have one option, but if you have held multiple positions, best to choose the current/applicable option.
 - You will know you've selected it successfully when you see "0" in that field; it will not display a name.

General Information

*Business Purpose	<input type="text"/>
*Description	<input type="text"/>
Default Location	DO NOT USE <input type="button" value="Q"/>
Reference	DO NOT USE <input type="button" value="Q"/>
*Expenses Supervisor	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Q"/>

Step 3: SUMMARY PAGE - "ATTACH RECEIPT" & "ACCOUNTING DEFAULTS"

- Attach Receipts & "Accounting Defaults" -
 - **Skip these both** unless your entire expense report is to be reimbursed on only **ONE** chart string.

Attach Receipt	>
Accounting Defaults	>

NOTE: In the next step, you'll have to edit the "Accounting Details" for every expense line regardless of whether or not you entered chart string information in this "Accounting Defaults" step. This step acts as an auto-fill option that fills out the "Accounting Details" (aka chart string) for each expense

If you choose to use "Accounting Defaults" to enter your ONE chart string, follow the below steps:

*Fund	*Dept	Program	ChartField 1	PC Bus Unit	Project	Activity
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

- Only fill in the following:
 - Fund: **first 3 digits of the chart string**
 - Department: **next set of 7 digits of the chart string**
 - MSE = 4735000
 - PC Bus Unit: **NWUNV**

- Project: [last 8 digits of the chart string](#)
- Activity: [01](#)
- Click “[Done](#)” on the upper right hand corner
- Click “[Update Details](#)” to start adding expenses

Step 4: ADDING EXPENSE DETAILS

- Add Expenses

*Date: 10/09/2018

*Expense Type: [Search]

Description: [Search]

*Payment: [Dropdown]

*Amount: 0.00 USD [Search]

*Billing Type: NU Expense [Dropdown]

Accounting: [Search]

- Date:
 - Date of the expense
 - (i.e. date airfare was purchased, not date of the flight)
- Expense Type:
 - Click on the magnifying glass
 - Select the appropriate expense type
- Description:
 - Enter information about the specific expense
 - Receipt description or another detail specific to the attached document for this expense.
- Payment:
 - Click on the drop down menu
 - Select Cash or Personal Credit Card
 - Prepaid by Northwestern - if staff paid w/CC, Egencia, etc.
- Amount:
 - Enter amount of expense
 - Meals – include tax and tip

- Click “[Save](#)” in the upper right hand corner
- Click “[Add](#)” to continue adding expenses
- Click “[Review and Submit](#)” when you are finished

Step 5:

- Click “[View Printable Report](#)” on the bottom left side of the screen.
- Print the report to obtain the PDF version of your expense report.
- DO NOT HIT “SUBMIT”
- Email your Expense Report PDF, PI Approval, & MSE Expense Reimbursement Form, & all other supporting documents to MSE Staff at MSEReimbursements@northwestern.edu.
- MSE Staff will submit the Expense Report on your behalf via NUFinancials
 - You will receive a notification/email requiring your "Employee Certification" or approval of the expense report.
 - Log in to NUFinancials ASAP to approve the expense report or it cannot continue through the Approval Chain.
- You will receive email notification when your reimbursement has been given final approval.

TIPS TO EXPEDITE YOUR REIMBURSEMENT GETS APPROVED

- Attach all documentation in one PDF instead of multiple PDFs.
- Clearly indicate, either in the description, in the notes, or in the uploaded documentation, who the award is for and which award it is (e.g., GRG award for Tom Smith, recruitment expenses for history, etc.).
- Make sure all expenses are included ESPECIALLY expenses that are pre-paid/directly charged to Northwestern
 - e.g., airfare & hotels via Egencia, corporate card transactions, etc.
 - Pre-paid expenses should be marked with “Y” for non-reimbursable, and need to reflect the chart string to which they were charged.
- Do not include expenses that you are paying out-of-pocket and for which you are not requesting reimbursement.
- Be sure to include itemized receipts for all transactions that detail what was purchased. Credit card receipts and summary receipts are insufficient. Include a line item description for each line.
- For students incorporating their TGS grant to pay for part of your travel expenses:
 - When more than one chart string is used (i.e., one from TGS and one from the home department), charge the entire amount of one or two items to the TGS chartstring to use up the funds instead of charging a percentage of all the line items.
 - For example, charge the airfare and a portion of the hotel to the TGS chartstring, up to the target dollar amount, instead of charging a percentage of every line item. This is one of the biggest time savers when approving an expense report.
-