

FAQs for Non-Federal SREA Reviewer Travel

1. Can Scientific Review Officers (SROs) authorize or approve special travel arrangements for non-federal reviewers?

SROs do not have procurement authority to approve the additional costs resulting from changes or special travel arrangements (flying in early, buying one-way tickets, etc.) for non-federal. Refer all special travel arrangement requests to the appropriate SREA Division Senior Program Specialist for a review of the request, and for consideration of approval.

2. Is World Travel Service (WTS) authorized to book three-leg trips for reviewers?

Yes, WTS is authorized to book alternate routing to include personal travel. However, if a reviewer is requesting NIH to pay for a single leg not associated or not touching the meeting location this will not be approved without prior approval from NIH. Any cost incurred due to changes associated with an alternate routing to include personal travel will be paid by the reviewer. The reviewer will be responsible to pay, via personal credit card, for all additional costs. WTS will be responsible for identifying and applying the additional costs to the reviewer's personal credit card.

3. What if additional sleeping rooms are necessary because non-federal reviewers are unable to return to their home destination by 8PM their time?

Scenario 1: Prior to the meeting dates

- Notify the hotel management to request the additional sleeping rooms and request the hotel to send a contract amendment.
- If the government per diem lodging rates are not available for additional sleeping rooms for non-federal reviewers, the SRO or ESA will need to complete an a "SREA Non-Federal Reviewer Lodging Request" form, for approval above the government per diem lodging rate.
- Send the "SREA Non-Federal Reviewer Lodging Request" form along with the hotel contract amendment to the SREA Senior Program Specialist for signature and approval.

Scenario 2: During the meeting or after the start of the meeting

- Contact the hotel management to arrange for the additional sleeping rooms.
- Send an email to CSRSREAHelp@csr.nih.gov requesting SREA approval for the additional sleeping rooms.
- The SREA Senior Program Specialist will call the hotel management to authorize the sleeping rooms to be charged directly to the master bill account at the government per diem lodging rates.
- If the government per diem lodging rates are not available for the additional sleeping rooms needed for non-federal reviewers, the Senior Program

Specialist will follow up with the SRO or ESA to complete the “SREA Non-Federal Reviewer Lodging Request”, after the meeting.

- In both scenarios
 - Notify your Division SREA Senior Program Specialist of the additional sleeping rooms for non-federal reviewers.
 - No additional M&IE will be reimbursed to the reviewer

4. Can a non-federal reviewer claim a car rental or limousine service for reimbursement?

SREA does not authorize a rental car or limousine service for reviewers to attend a peer review meeting. If the reviewer chooses to use a rental car or limousine service, the \$235.00 Flat Rate will be the only reimbursement.

5. A non-federal reviewer would like to drive his/her personal owned vehicle (POV) from his/her home destination to the location of the study section meeting instead of flying. How will he/she be reimbursed for his/her travel expenses?

POV Travel Costs More Than \$235 Flat Rate (receipts required)

If the total dollar amount for the mileage, parking and tolls claimed exceeds the \$235.00 Flat Rate, the NIH will reimburse the non-federal reviewer \$235.00 Flat Rate plus the difference not to exceed the cost of a WTS issued, non-refundable round trip ticket, from the reviewer’s domicile city to the destination where the NIH is hosting the meeting.

Example 1: If a non-federal reviewer claims \$250 for mileage, parking & tolls and the WTS quote for airfare is \$300, the reviewer will be reimbursed \$235 Flat Rate + \$15.

Example 2: If a non-federal reviewer claims \$250 for mileage, parking & tolls and the WTS quote for airfare is \$240, the non-federal reviewer will be reimbursed \$235 Flat Rate + \$5.00.

When approved to travel POV, non-federal reviewers must submit to the SRO via e-mail, a Google, Yahoo or MapQuest mileage calculation of the total POV mileage driven, receipts for parking fees (if any); and receipts for toll fees (if any) to attend the meeting. The non-federal reviewer will not be reimbursed for any extra hotel lodging costs he/she incurs due to an extended journey.

POV Travel Costs Less Than \$235 Flat Rate (No receipts required):

If the total dollar amount for the mileage, parking, and tolls claimed is less than or equal to the \$235.00 Flat Rate, the NIH will not reimburse the non-federal reviewer any additional funds.

Example 1: If a non-federal reviewer claims \$200 for mileage, parking & tolls and the WTS quote for airfare is \$185, the reviewer will be reimbursed \$235 Flat Rate only.

6. What is the procedure for making ticket changes as a result of severe inclement weather?

In the event of severe inclement weather resulting in airport closures, cancelled airline flights, or major airline delays, the non-federal reviewers must email World Travel Service (WTS) at nih@worldtravelservice.com or call at 1-800-638-8500. Prior SREA approval is not required. Reimbursements will be made to the reviewer upon submission of receipts and verification of the claim.

- Extra Lodging Nights: Out of pocket cost incurred through a personal credit card for extra lodging nights (receipts required).
- 2) Airfare Tickets: Non-federal reviewers should contact WTS to make any necessary changes. However, if out of pocket cost are incurred through a personal credit card for airline tickets, or change fees, the reviewer will be reimbursed (receipts required).

3) Per Diem for Meals: Non-federal reviewers will be reimbursed \$80.00 per day for each extra day the non-federal reviewer was not able to travel back to their home destination. (NO receipts required).

Note: The SREA severe weather blanket approval is for [non-federal reviewers. It does not apply to SROs or Federal Reviewers.](#) SROs or federal reviewers should contact CSR ASB office for further guidance on what may or may not be allowed.

7. Can a reviewer use frequent flyer points when booking through WTS?

WTS is authorized to apply frequent flyer points for a reviewer only if there is no additional cost to the government and the cost of the preferred airline carrier ticket is the lowest available cost ticket and most advantageous to the government at the time of booking.

8. If the meeting ends early, can I have WTS change my departure time?

If the meeting ends early, the reviewer may request WTS to change to an earlier departure time. WTS is authorized to change the ticket if both of the following conditions apply; a) if the departure time is greater than 2 hours and b) if the total change cost does not exceed \$600.00 (inclusive of airline change fees and WTS processing fees)

9. A non-federal reviewer is coming into town for NIH IC meeting. What does CSR pay for and what does the other IC pay for?

The reviewer should notify the CSR SRO they will be reviewing for another IC. The SRO should confer with the SREA Senior Program Specialist to determine the meeting costs will be shared between CSR and the other IC.

10. Can tickets issued by WTS be cancelled or refunded?

Non-federal reviewers must email WTS to cancel a ticket at cancel@worldtravelerservice.com. The airline will issue a credit voucher in the non-federal reviewers' name for up to 12 months and be held by WTS. The credit voucher can be applied only towards a future SREA peer review meeting the next time the reviewer attends another NIH peer review meeting. If the airline mistakenly sends the reviewer a refund check for the cancelled flight, instead of WTS, the reviewer should contact the SREA Senior Program Specialist for further guidance.

11. What should a reviewer do if they find a low-priced ticket on the internet?

The reviewer should contact WTS and direct them to the low-priced flight. WTS will determine if the flight can or cannot be booked. If the lowest-priced flight cannot be booked, WTS will provide the reviewer with an explanation and the reviewer is still required to make his or her reservation through WTS.

12. Can WTS make lodging arrangements for the non-federal reviewers?

No, WTS does not make lodging arrangements for peer review travel. Lodging arrangements for non-federal reviewers are made through the BPA hotel contract and charged to the government master bill account.

13. Booking online requires the non-federal reviewer to enter a corporate ID. What is it?

When non-federal reviewers use the WTS on line booking system, the login page will require the following:

- Username = reviewer's e-mail address
- Password = reviewer's choice
- **Corporate ID = NIH** (not case sensitive)

14. Can reviewers travel by Acela Trains?

Federal travel policy considers the use of Acela trains as a premium travel accommodations. Therefore, traveling by train through the Northeastern corridor to/from Washington, DC will be issued tickets only on the Amtrak regional trains. In addition to the federal travel regulations, there is no significant reduction in travel time in the Northeastern corridor due to the rail infrastructure which limits the many bends and turns at high speed.

15. Can a non-federal reviewer fly a day earlier than scheduled?

Non-federal reviewers are scheduled to fly on the day before the peer review meeting. A request for an exception to fly a day earlier than scheduled due to unusual circumstances will be considered and approved/disapproved on a case-by-case basis. The request must be approved prior to travel. Please contact your SREA Senior Program Specialist with the detailed information or send an e-mail request to CSRSREAHelp@mail.nih.gov for an immediate response.

For detailed non-federal reviewer travel guidelines, click on [NIH Non-Federal Peer Review Travel Guidelines](#) .