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## **SECTION I. INTRODUCTION**

### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this document is to provide helpful information and tips for those planning to attend an NPDN-MFIT Workshop. This guide will provide workshop policies and guidelines pertaining to registration, how to receive specific workshop details, how to make travel arrangements and how to request travel expense reimbursement. This guide includes the answers to the most frequently asked questions and common occurrences from past workshop seasons.

The goal of this document is to provide workshop participants with one document that contains all the information they need to know to participate in the MFIT Workshop.

Each workshop participant should understand their institution's rules pertaining to travel arrangements and reimbursements. The workshop coordinators hope the information supplied in this document, coupled with the understanding of each participant's institution procedures, will result in a stress-free planning and reimbursement process.

**Please read the entire document!**

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE REGISTERING FOR MFIT WORKSHOP:**

### **WORKSHOP POLICIES:**

- Workshop Policy 1: Attendance Policy
- Workshop Policy 2: No-Show Policy
- Workshop Policy 3: Registration Distribution Policy

### **Workshop Policy 1: Attendance Policy**

Participants must be present for the entire workshop. If the participant cannot attend **every day** and **all sessions**, they should take the workshop at another time. Participants **must complete all assigned homework, tests and hands-on activities** during the time period indicated, to receive a certificate of course completion.

If an emergency arises that affects attendance, the participant should...

1. Notify the workshop coordinators as quickly as possible. The coordinators may have a waitlist and someone may be able to fill the open space.
2. Notify the workshop instructor. The coordinators may have a waitlist
3. Contact a fellow participant. Others may be waiting for everyone on the participant list to show up in the hotel lobby on the first day.

### **Workshop Policy 2: No-Show Policy**

Participants that register for a virtual or in-person workshop and do not inform the workshop coordinator(s) and/or instructor(s) that a conflict arose that changes their plans to attend the workshop, will be placed on a **No-Show Listing** for subsequent workshops.

If placed on a **No-Show Listing**, the individual will be allowed to register for future Workshops but only after other NPDN members, partners and collaborators have had the opportunity to register. If there are open spaces after the deadline date, those on the **No-Show Listing** will be informed that they are now allowed to register for any open spaces.

**Workshop Policy 3: Good Coverage Policy**

The Good Coverage Policy was established to ensure those trained each year come from institutions broadly distributed across the United States and US Territories. To fairly distribute the available workshop spaces to diagnosticians, other laboratory and regulatory staff, and other appropriate individuals; one participant from each institution is allowed to register for one (1) in-person workshop and one (1) virtual workshop during the registration time period. Two individuals from the same institution may choose to share the spaces with one attending the in-person workshop and the other attending the virtual workshop.

Individuals hoping to attend more than one (1) in-person and one (1) virtual workshop in a season and additional individuals from the same institution may submit additional workshop requests but they will be placed on a waitlist until the registration deadline is reached.

Once the registration deadline date is reached, available spaces will be filled in the order they were requested, and state and institution of origin is no longer a factor.

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AFTER REGISTERING FOR A WORKSHOP:**

### **RECEIVING INFORMATION STEPS (see details for each step below):**

**Step 1: Request & response**-Those requesting registration will receive an email response.

**Step 2: Planning details**- After the deadline receive **LETTER A containing all planning details.**

NOTE: PLEASE **DO NOT** make travel arrangements until receiving LETTER A.

**Step 3: Pre-Workshop details**- **A few weeks before**, receive **LETTER B** with last minute details.

**LETTER A** is a first contact letter; **LETTER AI** for in-person & **LETTER AV** for virtual workshops.

**LETTER B** is a pre-workshop letter; **LETTER BI** for in-person & **LETTER BV** for virtual workshops.

### **Contact Steps-details:**

**Step 1: Requesting registration and email response.**

Registration requests may be submitted various ways. Regardless of the method used to request the workshop registration, requests will be confirmed, if space is available, via an email response.

**Step 2: Planning details – Letter A**

Once the registration deadline date is reached, the instructors and planning team members determine the final schedule. We ask everyone to hold off on making travel plans until the workshops are reviewed by the Leadership and Instructors just in case workshop dates need to be adjusted or low registrations cause a cancellation.

**What is included in LETTER A?**

**Letter AI-for those attending in-person workshops:** confirms the dates and times of the workshop, provides the hotel name and address, the lodging group code, lists best airports, ground transportation options, how lunches will be handled on workshop days and requests volunteer drivers. It includes email addresses for instructors and participants to contact each other if needed.

**Step 3: Pre-Workshop details – Letter B.**

A few weeks before the workshop, the **Letter BI** will be sent to the workshop participants to provide them with attendance details.

**What is included in LETTER B?**

**Letter BI-for those attending in-person workshops:** contains on-site details for the upcoming workshop, confirms first day meeting time and place, who to contact if delays and cancellations occur, directions to the workshop site, identification requirements for entering the building, the dress code, and how to handle lunch, snacks, and coffee, and an updated participant listing.

### **WHO GETS REIMBURSED and HOW:**

Cornell University will reimburse your home institution. The travel expenses of approved workshop participants are submitted as an **Institution Travel Reimbursement Request Letter**, an easy-to-follow

template available at the NPDN Portal, MFIT Workshop page.

**Participants must follow their home institution travel procedures and policies.** Past participants purchase airline tickets early for a better fare, and therefore need an advance. The terms of the grant do not allow Cornell University to offer advances, no funds can be provided until travel is completed. All original receipts stay with the home institution.

The reimbursement **MUST** go to the institution, **NOT** directly to the participant. See details regarding travel expense reimbursement in Section III.

## **SECTION II. PLANNING and TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Each traveler is responsible for making their own travel arrangements and paying the charges for travel-related services up front. The traveler's institution will be reimbursed after completion of the trip.

### **WHEN TO MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS:**

**DO NOT make travel arrangements until receiving LETTER A.** It is the signal telling you it is OK to do so. A minimum number of participants is required for each workshop. When the minimum number and the registration deadline is reached, LETTER A is sent. It confirms the workshop will proceed as planned and provides the details needed to begin making travel arrangements.

Wondering what details are included in LETTER A? Go back to Section I to see the description.

**DO NOT PLAN to leave before the completion of the workshop.** If attending an in-person workshop and hoping to return home the final day, schedule a return home flight at least 3 hours later than the workshop completion time. The airports in this area are very busy around the clock, so plan for lengthy ground travel times and long lines at check-in and getting through security.

### **IDENTIFICATION**

Workshop participants will need one form of picture ID to obtain a visitor pass. Instructions on where the participants will pick up their passes will be include in Letter AI or BI.

### **DESIGNATED HOTEL**

The workshop coordinators will provide a **group code/or website link** and address for a designated hotel in **Letter AI**. Be sure to use the group code supplied to receive the prearranged rate. Participants staying at the designated hotel is ideal to make traveling to and from the workshop site easier for everyone.

We understand some participants may have family and friends residing near the workshop site and may prefer to stay with them. That is totally up to the participant and fine with the workshop coordinators. If you choose NOT to stay at the designated hotel, please inform your fellow participants and the instructors so they are aware.

When planning various hotel activities, be aware that some items are not reimbursable. They include:

- Hotel fitness room fees,

- Saunas and massages,
- Pet care, kenneling and hotel pet charges.

Those not given the lodging room rate indicated in **Letter AI** should contact the hotel and request a correction. If not fixed, contact Barb Riker or Karen Snover-Clift, so they can try to correct the problem.

### **AIRLINE-FLIGHTS**

There are no restrictions on airline companies and airports used or the amount you spend for airfare. However, selecting more inexpensive options allows more participants to attend the workshops. Please make flight plans quickly after being given the green light to do so. Those that make plans early often get better rates and better rates allow more people to attend the workshops.

Common airports used for the PPCDL Workshops:

- Baltimore/Maryland Airport-BWI
- Reagan National Airport-DCA
- Washington Dulles-IAD

Airline fees **not reimbursable** include:

- Upgrades,
- Airline Clubs,
- Frequent Flyer Miles,
- Helicopter fees for Airport Transfer.

### **FLIGHT CHANGE FEES**

If you need to change your flight due to an emergency, the change fee and difference in airfare is reimbursable. Please choose an option with a reasonable fee, the more funding available will allow others to participate in the workshops.

### **TRAVEL INSURANCE IS NOT COVERED**

Any type of travel insurance is **NOT** a reimbursable expense through Cornell University.

Insurances **not covered** include:

- trip cancellation insurance,
- personal accident or property insurance,
- baggage insurance and non-compulsory health insurance.

If you prefer to purchase travel insurance for personal reasons, you will not be reimbursed for it, under any conditions. It is your choice but understand it is not a reimbursable expense.

### **GROUND TRANSPORTATION**

It is the responsibility of the traveler to arrange transportation from the airport to the hotel and vice versa. Most common ground transportation services are reimbursable. Examples of reimbursable methods include taxi, rideshare, airport shuttle service, metro/subway/train, and shuttle bus.

### **RENTAL CAR**

In hopes of keeping expenses down and minimizing the number of rental cars for each workshop, the organizers will request two volunteers willing to rent a car and drive fellow workshop participants to and from the meeting site each day. Often drivers also drive groups to dinner each night. Driving to dinner is not required as there are numerous restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

The workshop coordinators will request volunteer drivers in **Letter AI**. The workshop coordinators encourage participants to reach out to each other to coordinate rides, meeting times, if a delay in their arrival occurs, etc. If interested in driving, please respond as soon as possible. **Letter BI** will contain the volunteer driver's information so participants can converse with each other about plans.

**What happens if no one volunteers to be a driver?** The group will need to find an alternate method of transportation to get to and from the workshop site each day. The participants will need to make their alternate arrangements, such as reserving a taxi or Uber. Taxis and Ubers are allowable expenses.

#### Rental car details:

- Allowable expenses associated with a rental car include parking fees, fuel, and tolls.
- Items such as GPS, satellite radio, child car seats and other additions are not allowable expenses.
- Only TWO types of insurance are allowed. They are...
  - Collision (CDW)
  - Loss Damage Waiver (LDW)

**NOTE: If the insurance code differs from those listed (CDW, LDW), it is NOT a reimbursable expense. Do not let an attendant tell you their code is the same as CDW or LDW, IT IS NOT and past travelers have been burned.**

- Most travelers have additional rental car insurance already in place. Past workshop participants have shared with us that they were insured through a personal car insurance provider, a credit card company or through a university/employer-rental car company arrangement. You may want to look into this if you will be renting a car.

### **USE OF A PERSONAL OR BUSINESS VEHICLE**

Mileage expenses will be reimbursed to all those traveling to the workshop using a personal or business vehicle and to those using their personal vehicle to drive to the airport, train station or other method of transportation. The current mileage rate can be found at the GSA travel website,

<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100715>

#### Personal vehicle details:

- If the traveler is using his/her personal vehicle at the workshop location, be sure to include the mileage driven while onsite, from the hotel to the meeting site and transporting participants to restaurants for meals.
- Drivers submit the number of miles driven in the institution travel reimbursement request letter.
- Mileage reimbursement does not apply to rental cars.
- Fuel is not a reimbursable expense for personal vehicles; the per mile fee includes fuel costs.

**TOLLS AND PARKING**

All tolls and parking fees are reimbursable expenses for rental cars and personal/business vehicles. Instructions for parking at the workshop site will be included in Letter AI or BI.

Drivers-please check with the instructors to find out if you need a parking pass or need to register your vehicle when you arrive the first day of the workshop.

**MEALS-PER DIEM**

All meals are covered using your institution policies or the federal GSA per diem rate. **Participants should ask their institution representative which rate applies to them when receiving a reimbursement from a source other than their home institution.** In most cases, the traveler is required to use their institution's rates.

More details and examples of a typical trip's per diem request are provided in Section III.



### **SECTION III. TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST SUBMISSION**

#### **TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNT**

All acceptable travel expenses for the MFIT Workshop participants will be reimbursed with funds from a PPA 7721 grant. Be sure to read this entire section to learn how this process will work. Those that make plans early often get better options that are less expensive. Please make your plans as soon as you receive your **Letter A1** and choose options that are reasonably priced so others can benefit by attending these workshops too.

#### **WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE INSTITUTION REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST LETTER**

Cornell University provides one type of reimbursement method, reimbursement that goes to the participant's home institution. This was selected as the approved method for reimbursement because it simplifies the process. The workshop participants follow their home institution rules and guidelines and the reimbursement is provided to the institution in the form of a check or electronic deposit. Be sure to check with your institution to learn how this process will work for you, doing so will result in a smooth planning and reimbursement request process.

Be sure to follow these steps to submit the **Institution Travel Reimbursement Request Letter**. An easy-to-follow template is available at the NPDN Portal at:

[2024 Morphological Fungal Identification Techniques Workshop | National Plant Diagnostic Network \(npdn.org\)](https://www.npdn.org/2024-Morphological-Fungal-Identification-Techniques-Workshop)

1. The request letter must be written on **your institution's letterhead**,
2. The request letter must contain the **participant's name, workshop name and dates attended**,
3. Each expense should be listed with the **type of expense and the amount of that charge**, common categories include...
  - a. Lodging
  - b. Airfare
  - c. Rental car
  - d. Rental car fuel
  - e. Private or institution vehicle mileage
  - f. Tolls
  - g. Parking
  - h. Baggage Fees
4. **To ensure the reimbursement goes to the correct recipients and contains the needed references**, include the following in your letter.
  - a. Check should be made payable to: **(name of institution)**
  - b. Referencing: **NPDN-MFIT Workshop-Travel Expense Reimbursement for (PARTICIPANT NAME)**
  - c. For attending: **(name of workshop attended)**
  - d. Send reimbursement check to: **Contact Person Name  
(Institution)  
Street Address  
City, State, zip code**

In the past, who retains the original receipts has been unclear. Use of the **Institution Travel Reimbursement Request Letter** makes it very simple; the home institution retains all original receipts and copies are not needed with the request letter.

You may email the completed letter to the appropriate contacts listed at the end of this document.

**MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT:**

- To determine the reimbursement per mile current rate, go to the GSA travel website, <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100715>

**MEALS-PER DIEM REIMBURSEMENT:**

All meals are covered using your institution or the federal GSA per diem rate. **You should ask your institution representatives which rate applies to you when receiving reimbursement of your travel expenses.** In most cases, the traveler is required to use their institution's rates.

- The per diem meal allowance rate is either following the institutions policies or using the GSA rate.
- Meals are calculated according to the number of days traveled.
- The rate depends on the physical location of the hotel and the month and year.
- The per diem meal rate can be found at GSA website, <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877>
- When calculating meals, the per diem rate is broken down into 3 parts:  
Breakfast =20%, Lunch = 20% and Dinner = 60%
- If any meals are paid for by those organizing or hosting the workshop, refer to the percentages listed above and remove that amount for the day.
- If breakfast was included in the pre-arranged lodging group rate and utilized by the traveler, that should be remove from the day.

**An example calculation of per diem for a workshop:**

The traveler attended a 3-day workshop in March of this year. The hotel was located in Bowie, Maryland. According to the GSA website, the per diem meal allowance is \$79.00/day. The traveler arrived the evening before the workshop and returned the day after, making the entire trip 5 days. The travel days are calculated at 75% of the daily rate. The hotel provided breakfast, therefore, the per diem is decreased by 20% on the workshop days. Breakfast is not removed on travel days because the traveler may depart the hotel prior to breakfast availability.

<u>Day 1 (travel day)</u>	\$79.00 x 0.75 =	<b>\$59.25</b>
<u>Day 2 (workshop day 1)</u>	\$79.00 x 0.80 =	<b>\$63.20</b>
<u>Day 3 (workshop day 2)</u>	\$79.00 x 0.80 =	<b>\$63.20</b>
<u>Day 4 (workshop day 3)</u>	\$79.00 x 0.80 =	<b>\$63.20</b>
<u>Day 5 (travel day)</u>	\$79.00 x 0.75 =	<b>\$59.25</b>
<b>Total per diem reimbursed=</b>		<b>\$308.10</b>

If you departed the evening of the last day of the workshop, Day 4's per diem will be 75% of the allowable rate, or \$59.25, because it is a travel day and there is no Day 5.

**CONTACTS:**

If you have ANY questions about any of these items, please contact the primary reimbursement coordinator, Barb Riker, or Karen Snover-Clift, before making your arrangements and/or submitting your travel reimbursement. This may avoid delays in the reimbursement process.

Primary Reimbursement Coordinator:

Barb Riker  
Cornell University  
School of integrative Plant Sciences  
Plant Pathology and Plant Microbe Biology  
324 Plant Science Bldg.  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
[br347@cornell.edu](mailto:br347@cornell.edu)

Karen Snover-Clift  
Cornell University  
School of integrative Plant Sciences  
Plant Pathology and Plant Microbe Biology  
324 Plant Science Bldg.  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
[kls13@cornell.edu](mailto:kls13@cornell.edu)  
Cell: (607) 227-0397