

Memorandum of Agreement

Between

AFGE Local 2923 and NIEHS

Travel Savings Award Program

This MOA establishes the procedures for a Travel Savings Award Program for bargaining unit employees represented by AFGE L 2923 at NIEHS. The objective of the program is to achieve a net savings in travel expenses to NIEHS and the federal government. These savings will be accomplished by providing an incentive to employees to reduce travel expenses when on official travel, including travel associated with training activities. This MOA is in direct relation to Executive Order 13589 "Promoting Efficient Spending" and OMB Memorandum, M-12-12, dated May 11, 2012.

POLICY

Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) indicate that government travelers must adhere to the 'prudent traveler rule', which states that travelers must exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. Further, FTR stipulates that travelers must routinely fly on government contracted air carriers, using established GSA contracts, as well as reserving lodging not to exceed established per diem rates. HHS has developed its travel management contract and NIH has administered these rules through its travel management system, to provide the airfare and lodging to its travelers in compliance with these regulations.

Participation in the Travel Savings Award Program by employees is voluntary and recordkeeping is the responsibility of the participating employee. To be eligible, travel must be on official NIEHS business that is consistent with federal travel regulations. To the extent required, receipts for these expenses must be provided to demonstrate savings.

All Temporary Duty (TDY) travel with lodging expenses, foreign and domestic, will be covered under this program. (Permanent change of station travel, sponsored travel, and travel under a reimbursable support agreement are not included in this program.) Only the first 30 days of extended TDY travel can be counted as eligible for savings in this program.

If the employee chooses to participate, it is the employee's responsibility to join frequent traveler clubs, if necessary; to pay any fees for membership in such clubs; and, to maintain and submit any additional recordkeeping needed to measure the savings of the program.

All awards will be funded by the Agency, based on availability of funds, staffing, and legal authority. Each year, the Agency receives authority to fund awards and is subject to limitations and criteria. To this end, awards funds may not be available for use or may be depleted for other uses, such as performance awards or other special act awards. The parties agree that the use of funds for any recognition remains a Management right. Further, the parties agree that Agency staffing and workload requirements to manage the travel incentive awards program may be subject to limitations and the parties agree that decisions on staffing remain a Management right. If the Agency wishes, they may recognize employees at the Institute awards ceremony; however, they agree to do so without award specifics being shared publicly.

AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

NIH Awards Policy

Federal Travel Regulations

National Defense Authorization Act of 2002, Section 1116, Retention of Travel Promotional Items

31 U.S.C. 1353, Acceptance of Travel and Related Expenses from Non-Federal Sources

41 C.F.R. Subtitle F—Federal Travel Regulation System

GAO Appropriation Law Manual, Volume 1, Chapter 4, Availability of Appropriations

Section 1. ELIGIBLE SAVINGS

For the purposes of this savings program, employees may apply for an award when they 1) use personally earned promotional benefits from airlines to fly at no cost to the government on official travel authorizations; 2) use personally earned hotel rewards to obtain lodging at no cost to the government; or, stay with friends or relatives for lodging at no cost to the government.

Section 1116 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2002 allows Federal employees to retain for personal use promotional benefits, including frequent flyer miles, earned on official Government travel. It is the employee's choice whether to use promotional benefits, such as frequent flyer miles obtained through official Government travel, to earn travel savings awards.

GSA has ruled it is the responsibility of each traveler to communicate directly with a service provider to establish his or her frequent travel promotional benefits account. Any associated costs are to be paid by the traveler and are not a reimbursable expense.

Any promotional benefits or material received from a travel service provider in connection with official travel may be retained for personal use if such items are obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public at no additional cost to the Government. This includes all benefits earned, including those earned before enactment of the NDAA.

FREE COACH CLASS AIRFARE: Employees, who use, for official travel, a free coach class ticket with promotional travel benefits, such as frequent flyer miles or free nights, using hotel points earned on either official travel or personal travel, are eligible for the Travel Savings Award Program. Savings will be measured against the relevant contracted fare rate in effect at the time of the flight. If there is no contracted fare rate, then the lowest available non-restricted coach/Government fare will be used as the basis for measurement.

Employee use of a free ticket, obtained by relinquishing a seat on an overbooked flight, does not qualify for the Travel Savings Award Program.

Travelers will be required to travel from their selected home airport, unless they can demonstrate why there is a need to use an alternate airport.

FREE LODGING: Employees who use earned points, such as hotel rewards points, to receive free lodging, are eligible for the Travel Savings Award Program. Employees must turn in a hotel receipt to show the redemption of such points to qualify for the savings.

Alternatively, if an employee decides to stay at a friend or relative's house, and it is indicated on the travel documentation, thereby incur no lodging costs, he/she will be eligible for this savings program.

SHARED LODGING: When a room is shared between employees while on official travel, there will be a lodging savings if lodging does not exceed the established rate. The employees must arrange to be billed separately. If this is not possible, a daily rate must be determined for each employee. Divide the total lodging costs by the number of employees and the number of nights to arrive at a daily rate for each employee. (Sharing rooms will be on a voluntary basis for employees.)

Lodging shared with others (such as a family member or friend) who are not on official travel authorizations from NIEHS will not be eligible to participate in this program.

This program will encompass TDY travel expenses for foreign and domestic travel. Permanent change of station travel, sponsored travel, and travel under a reimbursable support agreement are not included in this program. Lodging costs incurred on personal time (i.e., annual leave) during official travel will not be counted as lodging savings under this program.

Awards for lodging savings must be reduced if the employee incurs additional reimbursable transportation expenses, such as taxicab expenses.

Hotels/motels must be approved based on fire/safety requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which are located at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.cfm>.

Note that Federal regulations entitle government travelers to approved lodging reimbursement, so any time a traveler chooses to stay with friends or family that is by personal choice. This is an option the traveler may use; the government cannot force it.

Section 2: DETERMINATION OF SAVINGS

To qualify for this award, the employee must first reach at least \$200 in authorized travel savings during a fiscal year. A traveler may reach this threshold at any point in the fiscal year, and may determine if they want to submit their request for the award at that time or wait until later in the year depending on their future travel plans and the availability of awards money. Once an award request is submitted for specific travel instances, any residual savings from that award cannot be carried forward to add to future awards.

Awards will be authorized for 50% of the savings. For example, if the savings total \$250, the award to the employee is \$125. Likewise, if the savings total \$400, the award to the employee is \$200.00.

NOTE: The maximum total Travel Incentive Award amount an employee may receive in a fiscal year is \$400 regardless of how much travel savings they achieve.

It is the employee's responsibility to submit the award application. All requests for awards must be submitted no later than July 1 of each fiscal year to process in a timely manner within the fiscal year closeout. Awards are subject to availability of award ceilings and funds availability.

Section 3: PROCESSING AWARD APPLICATIONS

The Agency may determine to provide awards at one time during the year (or at set times during the year) and, if so, such specifics will be clearly communicated to employees and publicized on Agency websites and emails involving travel.

Procedures:

When the traveler has accrued travel savings through free airfare and reduced/free lodging using his/her travel benefits program, he/she can then participate in the NIEHS Travel Savings Recognition Program by following these procedures:

- 1) Upon completion of a travel voucher, the employee must complete the electronic NIEHS Travel Savings Recognition Form (Appendix A).
- 2) The completed form, along with all supporting travel documentation, including a copy of the approved travel authorization, travel voucher, and receipts that show lodging savings or redemption of frequent flier miles, must be submitted by the traveler to the immediate supervisor.
- 3) Once approved, the supervisor submits the document to the AO. The AO must ensure the information the employee submits for the Travel Savings Recognition Program is complete and accurate and all necessary documents and receipts or travel card statements are submitted.
- 4) Upon completion of the AO review, a special act award nomination will be submitted to the NIEHS Awards Coordinator for compilation with other recognition requests.

Agency designated personnel will assist employees to ensure the necessary paperwork regarding the award approval, with supporting travel savings documents, are submitted as appropriate. Payment will be provided to the employee as soon as possible with regard to the limitations stated herein.

This Program shall be implemented in compliance with the CBA and Article 35 thereof. Any conflicts of language, the CBA shall take precedence.

Nothing in this document changes or waives either party's rights.

This MOA will expire on the same date that a new collective bargaining agreement is enacted between the parties. However, the parties may mutually extend or change this MOA at any time.

For the Agency:

01/11/2018

Date

For the Union:

01/11/2018

President, AFGE Local 2923

Date