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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-PPCDL 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 general information needed to know to learn about and participate in a PPCDL 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!**

### **WORKSHOP TOPIC SELECTION:**

Each year a **Topics-Needed Survey** is sent to the NPDN membership listserv, posted on the NPDN portal and advertised in the NPDN Communicator newsletter around the first week of September. The topics offered that year are selected based on the responses to this survey.

NPDN members, partners and collaborators are asked to be on the lookout for the survey each year, so the planning of workshops reflects the true needs of those that attend these workshops.

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

### **TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNT**

To demonstrate the collaboration between the NPDN and USDA-APHIS-PPQ, and to allow more to attend the workshops, the NPDN leadership set a travel reimbursement scholarship **up to \$1,500** for those attending one workshop and **up to \$2,000** for those attending two or more workshops.

Please keep in mind, lower expenses mean more diagnosticians get to attend these workshops! Those that make plans early often get better options that are less expensive. Please make your plans as soon as you receive your **LETTER AI** and choose options that are reasonably priced so others can benefit from attending these workshops too. If travel expenses exceed the cap, use of the participant's NPDN allocation funds to cover those expenses is allowed.

### **WORKSHOP POLICIES:**

- Workshop Policy 1: Attendance Policy
- Workshop Policy 2: No-Show Policy
- Workshop Policy 3: Broad Coverage 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.

#### **Key attendance instructions:**

1. If an emergency arises that affects attendance, the participant must notify the workshop coordinators and instructors as quickly as possible. The coordinators may have a waitlist, and someone may be able to fill the open space.
2. If an emergency arises that affects attendance, the participant should contact a fellow participant. Other participants may wait for everyone listed to arrive at the designated meeting place before driving to the workshop site. If informed, they will not wait for a participant that cannot be there.
3. DO NOT plan to leave before the completion of the workshop. If attending an in-person workshop and hope to return home the final day of the workshop, plan a return home flight **at least 3 hours later than the workshop completion time**. This takes into account the ground travel time to the airport and the time needed to get through security at the very busy area airports.

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

Participants that register for a virtual or in-person workshop, do not attend that workshop, and do not inform the workshop coordinator(s) and/or instructor(s) that a conflict arose that changed their plans, 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 PPCDL Workshops but only after other NPDN members, partners and collaborators have had the opportunity to register before a predetermined deadline date. 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: Broad Coverage Policy**

To fairly distribute the training opportunities, only one participant from each state will be registered in each workshop. Others from a state that already has someone registered, will be placed on a wait list in the order received. If space is available after the registration deadline, those spaces will be filled in the order they were requested, and state of origin is no longer a factor.

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

### **THE STEPS YOU WILL RECEIVE INFORMATION (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.

**Step 1: Request & 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.

We encourage hopeful participants to add back-up topics to their registration request. Workshops fill quickly. By adding a second or third choice in the initial registration request, the participant minimizes the back-and-forth emails and increases their chances of getting their second choice before capacity is reached for that workshop.

**Step 2: Planning details - LETTER A.**

Once the registration deadline date is reached, the instructors and planning team members determine the final schedule. Popular topics may be increased with an additional session if funding and time permits. Topics with low numbers may be cancelled. If cancelled, those registered will be contacted immediately after that decision is made.

**DO NOT make travel plans until you receive confirmation of the workshop in LETTER A.**

**What is included in LETTER A?**

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

**Letter AV-for those attending virtual workshops.** It confirms the dates and times of the workshop and contains information about the program used for the virtual session, the link(s) and password(s), and where workshop materials will be posted.

**Step 3: Pre-Workshop details - LETTER B.**

A few weeks before the workshop **Letter BI and BV** are sent to the workshop participants to provide pre-workshop attendance details. The B LETTERS may include an updated participant listing, needed by instructors and on-site drivers.

**What is included in LETTER B?**

**Letter BI-for those attending in-person workshops.** It contains on-site details for the upcoming workshop and 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.

**Letter BV-for those attending virtual workshops.** It contains a reminder of the upcoming virtual session and confirms the timing, links and passwords. It may list required hardware and software programs, if used. It will also contain 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 is available on the NPDN Portal, PPCDL 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 participant is responsible for making their travel arrangements and paying the charges for travel-related services up front. The participant'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.

### **IDENTIFICATION**

Workshop participants should bring at least one form of picture ID with them, as it may be needed when signing-in at the PPCDL, Bldg. 580.

### **DESIGNATED HOTEL**

The workshop coordinators will provide a **group code and/or link** and address for a designated hotel in **LETTER AI**. Be sure to use the group code supplied to receive the prearranged rate. Grouping participants at one hotel makes 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 up to the participant and fine with the workshop coordinators. If a participant plans to stay at a different location other than the designated hotel, they should inform their fellow workshop participants and 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 rate indicated in **LETTER AI** need to 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, there is a reimbursement cap and participants will be reimbursed for only expenses up to that cap. Please make flight plans quickly after 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, as long as you remain under the reimbursement cap.

#### **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 make arrangements to travel 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 workshop coordinators will request two volunteers willing to rent a car and drive their fellow workshop participants to and from the meeting site each day. Often drivers also drive groups to dinner each night. However, 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, again 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. If an attendant says their code is the same as CDW or LDW, IT IS NOT and past drivers have been burned.

- Many past 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. Participants that volunteer to drive should look into these established insurances before renting a car.

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

Mileage expenses will be reimbursed to those traveling to the workshop using a personal or business vehicle and to those using these vehicles to drive to the airport, train station or other 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 workshop participant is using a personal vehicle at the workshop location, they should include the mileage driven while onsite, from hotel to workshop site and to restaurants for meals.
- Drivers submit the number of miles driven in the institution travel reimbursement request letter.
- Fuel is not reimbursable for personal/business vehicles; the per/mile rate covers fuel costs.

**NOTE:** Mileage reimbursement does not apply to rental cars; the rental charge and gas are covered.

### **TOLLS AND PARKING**

All tolls and parking fees are reimbursable expenses for rental cars and personal vehicles.

The PPCDL Building 580 parking lot is quite small, therefore, parking space is limited. When possible, carpooling strongly encouraged to minimize the number of cars taking parking spaces.

Drivers should check with the instructors to learn if they need a parking pass or need to register the vehicle when signing into the building.

### **MEALS-PER DIEM**

All meals are covered using the workshop participants' 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 all cases received to date, the participant has been 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**

To demonstrate the collaboration between the NPDN and USDA-APHIS-PPQ, and to allow more participants to attend the workshops, the NPDN leadership set a travel reimbursement scholarship **up to \$1,500** for those attending one workshop and a travel expense reimbursement scholarship **up to \$2,000** for those attending two or more workshops.

Please keep in mind, lower expenses mean more diagnosticians get to attend these workshops! Those that make plans early often get better options that are less expensive. Please make your plans as soon as you receive your **LETTER AI** and choose options that are reasonably priced so others can benefit from attending these workshops too. If travel expenses exceed the cap, use of the participant's NPDN allocation funds to cover those expenses is allowed.

#### **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 participant must 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:

[PPCDL Workshops 2024 | National Plant Diagnostic Network \(npgd.org\)](https://npgd.org/workshops2024/)

1. The request letter must be written on **participant's institution 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-PPCDL 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. Each **institution** business office or travel **representative can provide 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.

Day 1 (travel day) \$79.00 x 0.75 = **\$59.25**

Day 2 (workshop day 1) \$79.00 x 0.80 = **\$63.20**

Day 3 (workshop day 2) \$79.00 x 0.80 = **\$63.20**

Day 4 (workshop day 3) \$79.00 x 0.80 = **\$63.20**

Day 5 (travel day) \$79.00 x 0.75 = **\$59.25**

**Total per diem reimbursed= \$308.10**

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)

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