NYU Guidelines for Research Expenditures Exceeding NYU and GSA Thresholds

This document provides guidance for charging hotel costs that exceed the NYU threshold listed in the Domestic and Foreign Travel Policy for Sponsored Programs and General Services Administration (GSA) thresholds. It is essential that all travel expenses are supported by proper documentation, including original detailed receipts. These receipts can be in the form of a picture, scanned copy, or photocopy of the original receipt and must be maintained for auditing and compliance purposes.

Additional Resources:

- Audit Impacts for Research Administrators
- UG Audit Info Session

General Guidelines:

- Proposals should include a budget for foreign and domestic travel costs, along with a clear justification for the travel.
- According to Uniform Guidance §200.475, lodging costs may be charged on either an actual cost basis or on a per diem basis, provided the same method is applied consistently for the entire trip and not on selected days of the trip.

Domestic Travel – Sponsored Projects (Funds 24, 25, 72, and 85)

Domestic travel charged to a sponsored project should comply with GSA lodging rates, unless otherwise specified by the sponsor. Lodging costs that exceed GSA rates are allowable only when adequate justification is provided to demonstrate that compliant lodging was not available. The only exception is when the sponsor or award agreement explicitly limits reimbursement to GSA rates, regardless of circumstances.

Acceptable Justification for Lodging Above GSA Rates

A written explanation is required to justify lodging that exceeds the GSA rate. The justification must:

- Clearly explain why alternative accommodations were not feasible.
- Support the reasonableness of the cost.
- Be sufficient for any reviewer to understand and agree with the decision.
- Be proactively provided (ideally before the actual travel and/or expense transaction).

Supporting documentation may include (but is not limited to):

- Hotel receipts or website printouts showing that the conference is being hosted at that hotel.
- Conference agenda or itinerary indicating the location.
- Proof that the conference hotel was fully booked (e.g., email or screenshot).

- Hotel quotes or comparative pricing showing alternatives were not available within GSA rates.
- Screenshots from travel websites (e.g., Expedia, Hotels.com) confirming that no hotels in the area met the GSA rate.

NYU's $350 Lodging Threshold

The $350 threshold in NYU's Domestic and Foreign Travel Policy for Sponsored Programs pertains to **non-sponsored projects.** *Sponsored projects should adhere to the GSA rates. Under the $350 threshold policy, travelers will be reimbursed for the actual cost of lodging up to $350 plus tax per day. ***Please note**: The NYU threshold was recently updated from $300 to $350, which is reflected in Concur. The NYU policies will be updated by Procurement shortly.

Conference-Site Hotels

For sponsored projects, if the conference is held at a specific hotel and the traveler stays at that hotel, the **full actual cost** of the lodging is reimbursable, even if it exceeds the GSA rate.

Foreign Travel:

For foreign travel, NYU uses the Department of State per diem rates, listed by country. Please see the links for additional information on foreign per diem rates and the Fly America Act flowchart.

FAQs for Actual Cost:

1. ***What should I do if the hotel costs $351 per night and the GSA rate is $240?***

   For sponsored projects, include a brief justification with your reimbursement request explaining why lodging at the GSA rate was not feasible—for example, that the selected hotel was the closest or most reasonably priced option available near the conference.

2. ***What if the hotel cost exceeds the GSA rate, but the sponsor allows us to charge the full cost to the project?***

   For sponsored projects, attach the sponsor approval, which can be in the form of an email explicitly stating that hotel costs above the GSA rate are allowed when submitting your reimbursement.

3. ***What if the hotel cost exceeds the GSA rate, but the conference is held at the hotel?***

   For sponsored projects, the full hotel cost can be charged to the sponsored project.

4. ***What if the conference is held at a hotel, but the traveler stays at a nearby hotel due to preference?***

   For sponsored projects, approval from the Fiscal Officer (FO) is required. Any cost difference between the conference hotel and the traveler's preferred hotel must be charged to a discretionary account.

5. ***What if the hotel costs $400, which is higher than the GSA rate of $290 and the NYU threshold of $350?***

   - **Sponsored project**: Include a justification with your reimbursement request explaining why lodging at the GSA rate was not feasible. For example, note that the selected hotel was the closest or most reasonably priced option available near the conference.
   - **Non-sponsored project**: Contact your FO for approval and guidance.

6. ***What if the conference offers a negotiated rate for nearby hotels due to the event's size and limited availability at the conference site hotel?***

   For sponsored projects, the full cost of nearby hotels at the negotiated rate is reimbursable. Documentation must include a copy of the conference agenda and proof of the negotiated rate (website or email) with the reimbursement request.