



## **Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP) Policy:**

### **Financial Travel Assistance to Attend MRBP Meetings or Events**

To facilitate MRBP member participation, and increase MRBP representation at annual ANS related events, the MRBP has established the following guidelines for travel assistance. Financial travel assistance is based on availability of funds. Application for travel assistance does not guarantee approval.

#### **Eligibility for Travel Assistance**

The MRBP will assist with travel for MRBP business when agency/organization restrictions, including insufficient travel budgets, would otherwise prevent travel.

Requests will be considered in the following prioritized order:

1. MRBP Executive Committee members
2. Invited speakers
3. MRBP voting members
4. MRBP non-voting members
5. Non-Panel members interested in Panel participation

#### **Level of Travel Assistance**

The MRBP will provide travel assistance based on the above prioritized order and at the Executive Committee's discretion, until the Panel's budgeted amount per meeting or event is reached. To provide travel assistance to the largest number of MRBP members as possible, requests for cost-share of travel expenses (e.g., travel expenses paid in part by the MRBP member's sponsoring agency or organization) will be given priority over requests for the MRBP to pay full travel expenses.

The MRBP will provide only the necessary financial support to travel in an efficient way and at best available rates. Per diem and mileage will not be reimbursed above GSA published rates for the current fiscal year (<http://www.gsa.gov>). Whenever possible, lodging reservations should be made as part of the established group block for the MRBP meeting or event. Alternative lodging should not exceed the rate offered as part of the established group block. MRBP travel assistance is limited to the individual attending the MRBP meeting or event; the MRBP will not reimburse additional expenses associated with guest travel.

## **How to Apply:**

Written requests for travel assistance should be submitted to the Panel Coordinator ([MRBP@micrarivers.org](mailto:MRBP@micrarivers.org)) no later than 30-days prior to the meeting or event for which assistance is requested, or by the specified deadline established for a specific event. The Panel Coordinator will announce the travel assistance application period no more than four months and no less than two months prior to an upcoming MRBP meeting and shall accept applications for travel assistance for at least a two-week period.

Requests should include:

- MRBP member's name and agency or organization
- Membership status (i.e. Executive Committee, voting , or non-voting member; invited speaker; or non-member)
- Meeting or event for which travel assistance is requested
- Dates of travel
- Itemized estimate of all travel expenses
- Cost-share, if any, by the individual or organization
- Specific expenses the MRBP is requested to reimburse
- Total amount of funding requested from the MRBP
- Justification for travel assistance

## **Approval of Travel Assistance**

The Panel Coordinator will compile and provide all requests received by the established deadline to the Executive Committee for consideration. The Executive Committee will make determinations on each travel assistance request received on a case-by-case basis and will take into account: 1) available funds, 2) demonstrated need, 3) membership type, 4) member of good standing, and 5) MRBP activity.

The Executive Committee will make determinations on travel assistance requests within two weeks of the close of the application period. Following determination by the Executive Committee, the Panel Coordinator will provide a response to each individual that requested travel assistance and confirm the level of travel assistance approved.

Following the determination of travel assistance requests received by established deadlines, the Executive Committee may consider requests for travel assistance received after the application deadline on a case-by-case basis and award assistance based on the availability of funds. The Executive Committee may also award travel assistance on a case-by-case basis for special events where MRBP representation is desired and no application period was announced.

## **Reimbursement of Travel Expenses**

Individuals that were granted travel assistance have up to one year after the last day of the meeting for which travel assistance was granted to submit their reimbursement request to the Panel Coordinator. Requests for reimbursement will be submitted to the MICRA Chairperson for authorization of payment by MICRA. The Panel Coordinator

should be contacted if payment has not been received within 3 weeks of submittal of request and required documentation.

Submitted reimbursement requests should include, at a minimum, the following information: (1) details on the travel to be reimbursed (i.e., dates and location), (2) original amount requested and actual costs to be reimbursed, (3) documentation for requested reimbursement (i.e., signed receipts and/or expense reports), (4) break-down of expenses and cost-sharing, (5) specific entity to receive reimbursement, and (6) mailing address where the reimbursement check will be sent. Requests may include a copy of the individual's agency or organization travel voucher itemizing claimed expenses and providing the total reimbursement request. Signed copies of receipts should be provided for all claimed expenses other than meals.

Requests for reimbursement that exceed the original amount requested must include a detailed explanation, and are subject to approval by a Co-Chair. Failure to provide required information in a timely manner may result in a delay of reimbursement. Reimbursement requests received after one year of actual travel will be discarded and no reimbursement will be issued.