

Atlas Alliance Travel and Event Expense Policy

Effective Date: January 1st, 2026

1. Purpose	1
2. Definitions and Terminology	2
3. Key Principles	2
4. Scope	4
5. Meals and Accommodation	4
6. Transportation	6
7. Country-Specific Provisions and Adaptations	6
8. Attendance / Documentation Requirement	7
9. Oversight, Tools and Reviews	8
Annexes/Resources	8

This policy outlines the routines and regulations for expenses related to meals, accommodation and transport during project-related events and missions funded by the Atlas Alliance. Its primary objective is to promote efficiency, fairness, transparency, and accountability in the use of project funds, while encouraging modest and justifiable expenditure.

All organizations receiving funding from the Atlas Alliance are required to have rules for travel and event expenses in line with this policy.

1. Purpose

The Atlas Alliance and its member organizations work for the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities. This policy will ensure that funding is spent in an effective and transparent way. This is done both by ensuring

moderation in budgeting and avoiding that our routines are incentivizing behavior and activities that can be conflicting with our objective.

2. Definitions and Terminology

Allowances: Various terms are commonly used to describe organizations' payments of money to individuals to cover basic expenses incurred during activities and travels outside the organization's office. Examples include Per Diem, Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) and travel allowance. These terms can have multiple interpretations and may be applied differently in different countries.

In this policy, we use the overarching term 'allowances'. To ensure clear understanding and accurate costing, the specific type of expense that an allowance is intended to cover should always be stated. For example:

- Accommodation allowance
- Transport allowance
- Breakfast-, lunch- and dinner allowance

Events (Workshops, Trainings, Seminars, Meetings): An event is a structured group activity involving multiple participants, with pre-agreed purpose, typically held in a single location.

Missions/Field Visits: A mission involves a smaller group carrying out fieldwork or specific assignments, with pre-agreed deliverables, often outside their usual location.

External participants: All participants in events and missions that are not own staff are called 'external participants'.

3. Key Principles

Actual costs first: The standard approach is for the organizations to cover the actual documented costs of meals, accommodation, and transport, within agreed maximum limits. Payments should preferably be made directly from the organization to the service provider (e.g. venue/hotel/restaurant). If this is not feasible, staff can pay service providers individually and get reimbursed through travel expense claims. Allowances may only be used

where actual expenses cannot reasonably be documented or paid directly. This minimizes financial incentives for attending events and missions and encourages participation that is motivated by programmatic interest.

Limit costs: Event and mission costs should be kept moderate. Event locations should be chosen to minimize overall costs, e.g. the location where the majority of participants reside. Organizers should use their own venues when possible. Standards should be reasonable and modest.

Events and mission justification: Events and missions must be necessary to achieve the objectives of the project. They must only be organized if cheaper alternatives (e.g. virtual meetings) are not suitable. Duration must be reasonable. Only participants who are essential for the events' objectives should participate.

Allowances shall only compensate for basic costs incurred: Allowances shall not be considered part of regular staff or volunteer remuneration, nor should they serve as a reward for volunteer work or a substitute for fair wages.

Allowance rates must reflect the actual cost level at a modest standard. Participants receiving allowances are not meant to make a profit from these payments.

The following payments are not allowed:

- Motivation allowance
- Work hardship, e.g. being away from home on travel
- Loss of income for project participants due to participation in activity.

No allowances shall be provided for listening, attending, or performing expected roles (sitting allowance/motivational allowance or similar).

Equity: All people should have equal opportunities to participate regardless of who they are. This could mean that a person with a disability could have higher expenses if this is necessary to participate.

Equality: All individuals receive the same standard and rates, regardless of role or position.

4. Scope

Below is an overview of the types of activities, participants and costs that this policy applies to.

Types of Activities: The policy applies to project events, i.e. workshops, trainings, seminars and meetings, in addition to missions and field visits.

Types of Participants: The policy applies to all individuals participating in the above-mentioned activities. This includes:

- Own staff and board members
- Volunteers and unpaid contributors
- Project participants and other community members
- Other stakeholders (representatives from government, civil society, private sector etc.)
- Companions (sign language interpreters, interpreter guides, personal assistants etc.) of persons with disabilities (when justified)

Exceptions: Participants who receive funding for meals, allowances, or transportation from other sources, or who are covered by separate written agreements, are exempt from this policy. This includes e.g.:

- Government staff that follow government rates. Written overview of rates must be submitted
- Consultants

Types of costs: This policy applies only to meals, accommodation and transport.

Below is a list of payments **not** covered by this policy:

- Communication/incidentals
- Compensation for time-use, for example volunteers' compensation
- Meals during overtime work

Geographical Coverage: The policy applies to local and national events and missions. International missions are governed by separate provisions.

5. Meals and Accommodation

In line with the actual costs first principle, the organization hosting an event should pre-arrange and pay the cost of meals and accommodation directly to the provider whenever possible. This may include conference meal packages,

hotel-provided breakfasts, catered lunches or restaurant lunches. For own staff, costs related to meals and accommodation during events can also be paid through travel advances and expense claims.

For missions, a staff member can pay for meals and accommodation directly with organization funds on behalf of the travelers, or travel advances and expense claims can be used.

Eligibility for meals: Distance, duration and timing of events and missions that establish eligibility

The general principle is that one is eligible for a meal during events and missions when it is not feasible to follow regular meal plans such as to eat at home or at work.

Distance: It is not feasible to follow regular meal plans when the distance from the usual workplace/home makes it unreasonable to return for a meal. As a rule of thumb this is 15 km, but this must be adjusted to local transport and traffic conditions.

Duration: To qualify for meals the work-related event/mission must as a rule of thumb last for more than four hours. Local adaptations can be made.

Timing: The timing during the day of the event/mission affects whether meals are needed, the specificities of this must be set at country level. E.g. a mission starting at 11.30 might or might not qualify for lunch, depending on local meal cultures.

Breakfasts are only covered after overnight stays. If it is included in the room-rate, it is not covered separately.

Accommodation is only covered where overnight stays are justified by the program of the event/mission.

Rates: Each country group will set common maximum rates for meals and accommodation. These rates should be applied both when paying allowances to individuals, and as ceilings when paying costs directly to hotels, restaurants etc. This is in line with the principle of limiting costs.

Where safety or access cannot be ensured at standard rates, higher rates can be approved in advance.

6. Transportation

Transportation for project participants is one of the areas where allowances are often needed. Tickets are often not available, and participants need to be paid in advance for their return trip.

Covering of costs for various means of transport:

Public transport:

- Reimbursed based on actual tickets.
- If tickets are not issued, payment shall be made based on prevailing market rates.

Organizations Vehicles:

- Rules for managing the organization's own vehicles must be defined in the financial manual of each organization.

Private/rented car, motorbike or other vehicles:

- Reimbursement is based on standard national rates per kilometer, covering fuel, maintenance, insurance, taxes etc.

Cost control: Transport must be arranged to minimize costs through:

- Shared vehicles.
- Group travel.
- Public transportation where this is feasible and is the cheapest option.

7. Country-Specific Provisions and Adaptations

In each project country a committee should determine and regularly update rates and other country-specific provisions, based on prevailing market prices and other local conditions. Final approval of the committee's work rests with the Norwegian Organizations in the Country Programs.

The following issues should be tailored to each country:

Distances, durations and timing of events and mission that establishes eligibility for meals

The distance that makes it unreasonable to return to the office/home for a meal, and the duration and timing of an event that makes meals required.

Rates:

- The maximum rates for each type of meal: breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- The maximum rate for accommodation.
- Whether meal and accommodation rates vary between different regions or urban/rural and hence need to be set accordingly.
- Rates for public transport or a system for how partners can find this information.
- Rates for fuel and other operational costs for car use per kilometer.

Methods for setting rates:

The following must be determined at country level:

- Relevant local sources of information about costs of meals, accommodation and transport.
- The frequency at which all rates should be updated.

ID-requirements: The type of ID that should be used to identify event participants in attendance sheets must be determined at country level, based on what ID people usually hold.

Allowance matters linked to collaboration with government staff: If there are specific local considerations relevant to collaboration with government staff, this should be clearly documented and incorporated into the country-specific allowance provisions.

Overall terminology to be used in local budget

In local documents and budgets a local term for 'allowance' can be used. But requirements for specifications must be followed. If e.g. the local term is 'DSA', it must be possible to break it down into specified 'lunch DSA', 'accommodation DSA' etc. In budgets, allowances belong under the travel cost category.

8. Attendance and Documentation Requirement

To be eligible for any allowances:

- Participants must be invited.
- Participants must attend in person.
- Participants must sign a daily attendance sheet.

- Participants must present a form of ID, to be determined by each country. Government-issued ID is ideal.
- Payments must be supported by original documentation:
 - Invoices (venues, accommodation)
 - Receipts (transport, accommodation where allowed)
 - Signed attendance sheets and distribution forms. Measures must be in place to encourage full attendance.

9. Oversight, Tools and Reviews

Partner organizations must:

- Maintain up-to-date written policies and rates.
- Use standard templates for:
 - Attendance
 - Allowance distribution
 - Budget tracking
- Review and revise policies and rates regularly.
- Ensure controls are in place to prevent anyone receiving double payments of allowances.

Annexes

To be developed and attached by each country group or partner based on local context.

Annex 1: Allowance Distribution Template

Annex 2: Attendance Register Template

Annex 3: National Rate Sheet

Annex 4: Budgeting Template for Events