OpenMRS Inc. Travel Grant Program

One of the ways that OpenMRS Inc. supports the OpenMRS open source community is by sponsoring contributors to attend OpenMRS events such as conferences and hackathons. The organization provides travel grants for speakers and contributors to events such as OpenMRS Implementers Meetings, OpenMRS Leadership Camp, and the OpenMRS Worldwide Summit, among other events.

Sponsorship requests are processed by a Travel Committee appointed by OpenMRS Inc. The sponsored travel is meant to help those that would like to attend events but are unable to do so for financial reasons. **Follow the request instructions to request sponsorship.** All OpenMRS contributors are encouraged to apply! Funding each year is set by the OpenMRS Inc. budget and is limited, and will be awarded based on merit of each application.

Travel grant policy overview

OpenMRS contributors can be sponsored to further the development of the OpenMRS community and its software, as well as to spread the word about OpenMRS. **It is your responsibility to always choose the most economical option whenever possible.** OpenMRS Inc. spends a significant portion of its budget on sponsoring travel for community members, and it is unlikely that there will be enough funding to support all of those in need. The Travel Committee will look for the most economical options and use those costs as a reference when deciding on a sponsorship. **Remember, the money you save is the money that can help someone else travel and participate.** It also means we might be able to help you again in the future.

What costs are eligible for sponsorship?

- **Travel costs:** flight tickets, train tickets, etc.
- **Accommodation:** hostel, hotel, etc.

What is NOT eligible for sponsorship?

Tax laws, as well as other laws and policies prohibit sponsorship of certain types of costs, such as:

- Travel and accommodation if you do not attend the event, for example due to a rejected visa application,
- Local travel (unless explicitly permitted in advance),
- Food,
- Taxes,
- Extra charges for bank cards,
- Visas, passports, etc.

Exceptions to WHAT can be sponsored

OpenMRS Inc. may sponsor extra costs when the applicant explicitly requests (and obtains an explicit approval from the board) to attend a specific event. Any such costs must be discussed with the Travel Committee before incurring them and are subject to the Travel Committee's approval. In the case of approved meals, a daily limit is established for each country, and the number of days will be limited to the duration of the event.

Exceptions to WHO can be sponsored

OpenMRS Inc. may occasionally sponsor people who are not current contributors, such as previous Google Summer of Code students who had a good track record in their projects and have the support of the GSoC/OPW administrators may be partially or fully sponsored to attend to an OpenMRS event. These exceptions must be pre-arranged with the Travel Committee.

Invitation Letters

OpenMRS Inc. or the host individual/organization may be able to provide an invitation letter, which may be required or recommended for applying for a visa. OpenMRS Inc. may also be able to provide a letter of travel sponsorship after the Travel Committee approves the travel sponsorship. Please follow the provided instructions for requesting such letters.

Requirements of travel grant recipients

- Write a report about your event at its conclusion. Blog posts are the preferred type of report.
- Be available to meet with the event's advisory board members, or the event sponsor(s).
- Be available to help other event attendees, especially those who want to get involved with OpenMRS.
- Inform the Travel Committee as soon as possible if you cannot attend the event.
- **Important:** Provide copies of original receipts (not bank or credit card statements) for **all** relevant costs.

About the event report

In your report, you can describe talks you attended, activities you participated in, new people you met, how this event changes or encourages your involvement in OpenMRS, and so on. It can be written as one blog posts, or several blog posts. If you cannot write a public report for some reason, you must email it to the Travel Committee. You must write about the event and your attendance, because your report will help OpenMRS Inc.:

- Justify its investment in you,
- Show potential sponsors the impact of sponsoring travel, which helps raise money for future travel, and
- Spread the word about OpenMRS and accomplish the OpenMRS mission of providing Health IT systems to the under-served.

How to apply for a travel grant

ⓘ ***If you are applying for a scholarship to our annual Implementers' Meeting, [please follow these instructions](#).***

Applications are processed by email through the OpenMRS community help desk. By applying for a travel grant, you understand that:

- You will be reimbursed for your expenses after the trip,
- The application form below must be completed in full,
- You must provide **all** receipts for all expenses before reimbursement happens,
- You must write a report of the event as described above, and
- OpenMRS Inc. reserves the right to use information about the grant publicly and use it in any advertisements or promotional reasons seen fit by OpenMRS Inc.

Copy the form below into an email to to community@openmrs.org and provide responses inline following each question. Please remember:

- Events organized or sponsored by OpenMRS Inc. may have a deadline for travel grant applications.
- All applicants will receive an email acknowledging the application, and may receive follow-up questions before a decision is made.
- All relevant receipts and invoices must be sent to the Travel Committee before any reimbursement will be paid.
- Receipts **must** be sent within two weeks after the event or the grant will be cancelled.

Please note that OpenMRS Inc. will not reimburse, compensate or indemnify any risk, expense or liability not explicitly identified and agreed to in this application. Any additional costs you incur or damages you suffer, even unforseen ones, will not be borne by OpenMRS Inc. You are not covered by any insurance policy held by OpenMRS Inc. Receiving a travel grant does not mean you are an employee or agent of OpenMRS Inc.

Travel grant process workflow

ⓘ ***If you are applying for a scholarship to our annual Implementers' Meeting, [please follow these instructions](#).***

1. Review the event you would like to attend, and review this page to evaluate if the event (and you) are eligible for sponsorship.
2. Fill and send your application in text format to community@openmrs.org.
3. Wait patiently for a response from the Travel Committee. You will either be:
    a. Offered sponsorship,
    b. Asked for more details,
    c. Asked to update your application, or
    d. Be informed that your application was declined.
4. Accept the offer by replying by email.
5. Book your travel based on the information in your application.
6. Send your receipts to community@openmrs.org no later than two weeks after the event.
    a. Send PDFs of email receipts for flight tickets, etc.
    b. Scans and photos need to be cropped to show only the receipt.
7. Write your report, preferably in blog form, following instructions above.
8. You will receive a confirmation of your receipts and report.
9. You will be reimbursed based on the method requested in your application.

Personal information

1. First/Given name(s):
2. Family name:
3. Employment or project affiliation (if any):

Event information

1. Event name:
2. Role at the event: [ ] Participant [ ] Speaker [ ] Organizer [ ] Other, please specify
3. Traveling from (city & departure date):
4. Traveling to (city):
5. Date of return to city of original departure:

Statement of interest

Write no more than 150 words for each of the following questions:

1. Why should you attend the event?
2. Why should you be sponsored?
3. Can you attend without sponsorship?
4. Include relevant contributions
5. Number of years using or contributing to OpenMRS

Financial request details

1. Your total estimated travel costs (amount and description):
2. Your total estimated lodging costs (amount and description):
3. Other costs (amount and description):
4. Requested subsidy total: (How much of the above costs you would like covered by OpenMRS Inc.)
5. How you will want to be reimbursed: (delete as appropriate)
   a. Check in US funds from a US bank made out to _____ and mailed to _____
   b. Bank transfer
      i. Account holder's name and address:
      ii. IBAN (account number if IBAN is not available):
      iii. SWIFT or BIC:
      iv. Bank name and address:
      v. Currency of account:

Things to keep in mind during the process

- Be patient. OpenMRS is a volunteer organization!
- If it is taking too long and you see prices could significantly raise (or something similar) please reply to your confirmation email.
- **Do not buy anything until you receive a very clear confirmation of your travel grant:** Applying does not mean you are approved, and silence does not mean approval.
- Find the best fares for tickets and accommodation. Look at various airlines and routes, try to avoid travel agencies since they usually charge extra fees up to 10% or 20%.
- The travel committee use web sites such as Hipmunk to check/verify flight prices.
- Find a roommate to save on lodging costs where possible. Ask if you need help.
- **Ask for only what you need.** If you can afford to pay for some of your ticket or lodging, we would really appreciate, since that means we can help more people.
- Be responsible, the money you save is the money we will use to fund someone else or even yourself again! 🙂