

Conference Funding

CHEAT SHEET

Trying to attend a conference but experiencing financial constraints?

AAEM/RSA has your back. We understand the importance of attending professional conferences throughout your journey in emergency medicine—these events are perfect for growing your knowledge base, networking with future mentors and colleagues, and presenting your research. Yet, we know that financial barriers are often what preclude attendance. We have compiled a list of our best tips, a “cheat sheet” if you will, of how you can find funding and minimize costs for conference attendance. To assist you in securing funding and minimizing costs associated with conference attendance, we have crafted a comprehensive “cheat sheet” of our most effective tips. We hope you find this helpful!

1. Plan Ahead to Reduce Costs

- **Register Early:** Look out for any early registration discounts months in advance of the conference.
- **Book the Conference Rate:** Many conferences provide discounted rates at the hosting hotel. Be sure to inquire about these discounts early to secure your reservation before the hotel reaches capacity!
- **Room with Other Residents/Students:** Consider sharing a room with a co-resident or peer who plans to attend the conference to save money on accommodations. Social media platforms host specialty-specific groups where you can also connect with colleagues interested in sharing accommodations; keep in mind, however, that sharing a room with someone you don't know well requires personal discretion.
- **Use Loyalty Programs:** Credit card companies often offer discounts on hotel reservations and car rentals. Also consider using airline points/miles, if you have them, to purchase flight tickets.

2. Institutional Funding

- **Departmental Grants:** Your institution's Department of Emergency Medicine may offer discretionary funds to support participation of residents and medical students in relevant conferences, especially if one is presenting research or a didactic or holds a leadership position in the organization putting on the conference. For residents, these funds may be outside of or in addition to annual GME educational allowances.
- **Medical School Funds:** If you are still a medical student, check with your student affairs or financial aid office to inquire about travel grants or professional development stipends to support students attending conferences.
- **Research Grants:** If you intend to present research at a particular conference, speak with your research advisor or Principal Investigator about whether there is funding available for conference travel. If your research is funded by a grant, there may be money already set aside for this purpose.
- **Extramural Research Funding:** If you are part of a larger research team, ask your Principal Investigator about the presence of some external research grants (such as those from the National Institutes of Health) that may include funds to cover presentation of research.

3. Professional Organizations

- **Travel Grants and Scholarships:** Many medical associations or specialty-specific organizations offer travel grants and scholarships to residents and medical students to offset the cost of attending and/or presenting research at their conferences. While these can often be competitive and require an application process, it may be worth it, especially if the conference is being held in an expensive location across the country (or world).
- **Discounted or Waived Registration Fees:** Several organizations like AAEM, offer significantly reduced or waived registration fees for resident or student attendees. Once registration opens, review the conference website for more information about special rates for trainees.

4. Conference Volunteer Programs

- **Ambassador Opportunities:** Some conferences (like AAEM's Scientific Assembly!) allow students to volunteer at the conference in exchange for a free or discounted registration. Travel stipends may also be provided! In this role, you may be responsible for assisting with registration, assisting in session logistics, and directing attendees to the proper locations. Check the conference's website to see if they offer this opportunity for medical students.

5. External Scholarships

- **Private Foundations:** Financial support for attending conferences may be offered by certain foundations to medical trainees, often when the topic of the conference aligns with the foundation's mission, such as promoting diversity in medicine by supporting underrepresented students.