

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish uniform travel and business expense reimbursement policies, rules and claim procedures for persons authorized to conduct County business. This policy applies to all County officers and employees, members of legislative or advisory bodies established by the Board (salaried or not), volunteers, contractors, and consultants traveling on County business when authorized under the terms of this policy. For ease of reference, the Travel Policy is presented in the following sections:

- I. General Policy
- II. Authorization to Travel
- III. Transportation Expenses
- IV. Meal Expenses
- V. Lodging Expenses
- VI. Advance Payments
- VII. Compliance – Responsibility of Claimant

I. GENERAL POLICY:

Pursuant to Board of Supervisors Policy B-1, "Budget Control and Responsibility", it is the primary responsibility of department heads to maintain their departments' expenditure levels within the Board approved budget. In accordance with this responsibility, department heads shall have broad discretion and authority related to travel activities and expenses for their departmental employees, contractors, and consultants subject to the provisions of this policy.

- A. County officers and employees should not suffer any undue loss when required to travel on official County business, nor should said individuals gain any undue benefit from such travel.
- B. Travel shall be authorized only when the travel is in the best interest of the County.
- C. County officers or employees compelled to travel in the performance of their duties and in the service of the County shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses for transportation, parking, tolls, and other reasonable incidental costs, and shall be reimbursed within maximum rate limits established by the Board of Supervisors for lodging, meals, and private auto use.
- D. Contractors and consultants may be reimbursed in accordance with this policy when such reimbursement is authorized pursuant to an agreement for services.
- E. Travel arrangements should be as economical as practical considering the travel purpose, , timeframe available to accomplish the travel mission, available transportation and facilities, and time away from other duties.
- F. Forgoing one allowable expense is not an acceptable justification for exceeding the allowable reimbursement for another expense. For example, carpooling when not required to do so shall not be justification for reimbursement for a more expensive parking option.
- G. In the event there is a question regarding compliance with this Policy, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) shall be responsible for interpreting this Policy and shall make the final determination regarding compliance.
- H. The CAO or designee may authorize an exception to requirements set forth in this Travel policy, upon written request by the appropriate, responsible department head. Any granted exception is to be

applied on a case-by-case basis and does not set a precedent for future policy unless it has been formally adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

- I. This policy does not apply to meal or travel costs related to inmates, juvenile wards, or Health and Human Services clients.. Such costs may be authorized at the department head's discretion and claimed through normal claiming procedures.

II. Authorization to Travel

A. General Conditions

1. Except as otherwise provided in this policy, advance authorization is required for travel.
2. Where department head approval is required, that approval may not be delegated unless specifically stated.
 - (a) Annually, at the beginning of the fiscal year, each department shall provide the CAO and Auditor-Controller with a list of employees who are authorized to approve travel requests, and shall inform both offices of any changes to the list throughout the year.
3. Travel by non-County personnel, excluding volunteers, must be approved by the department head responsible for the expense. Travel by volunteers may be authorized in the same manner as travel by County employees.

B. In-County Travel

1. No specific written advance approval is required for in-County travel for activities that are considered a part of the routine, day-to-day operations of the department, as defined and authorized by the department head or designee, and in-County travel which does not require overnight lodging.
2. In-county overnight travel requires advance written authorization by the department head or designee.

C. Out-of-County Travel

1. All overnight travel outside of the County by anyone except members of the Board of Supervisors and the Board Members' immediate staff requires advance written authorization by the

department head or designee. Out of County travel by immediate staff of a member of the Board of Supervisors requires the advance written authorization of the respective Board member.

2. Except as provided below, all travel outside of the states of California and Nevada by anyone except members of the Board of Supervisors and the Members' immediate staff requires advance written authorization by the department head and CAO or CAO's designee.
3. Travel outside the states of California and Nevada may be approved by the department head or designee under the following circumstances
 - (a) Travel by law enforcement personnel in the performance of law enforcement activities including but not limited to extraditions and investigations.
 - (b) Travel required to perform duties pursuant to an order of the court.

III. Transportation Expenses

A. General Conditions

1. Transportation expenses are the direct costs related to movement of the traveler from the authorized point of departure to the destination of travel and back to the authorized point of return.
2. All transportation expenses incurred shall be based upon the most efficient, direct, and economical mode of transportation available.
3. Whenever a time frame is established as criteria for eligibility for claiming reimbursement, estimated travel time shall be based upon legal vehicle speed limits, volume of traffic, and weather conditions in effect at the time of travel.

B. Vehicle Transportation

Vehicle use (both County-owned and private) by authorized travelers during the conduct of official County business is subject to Board of Supervisors Policy D-4: County Vehicle Use-Privately Owned and County Owned Vehicles.

1. Private Vehicle

The use of private vehicles is discouraged. The use of a County fleet vehicle is preferred; however, reimbursement for use of a private vehicle, when such use has been authorized by the department

head or designee, may be reimbursed subject to the following:

- (a) Travel by private vehicle will be reimbursed at the IRS rate for business use of a personal vehicle in effect in the County at the time of travel. This mileage reimbursement rate shall be considered to be full reimbursement for all costs in use of the private vehicle, except for reasonable costs for snow chain installation and removal.
- (b) If air travel would be less costly but the County Traveler prefers to drive, the County will reimburse the traveler for transportation costs equal to what the cost of air travel would have been, including airfare, shuttle, car rental, mileage to the airport, and other costs determined to be reasonable by the department head or designee; transportation costs over and above that amount, as well as any extra days of lodging, meals and incidentals incurred as a result of the decision to drive will be considered a personal, not reimbursable cost of the traveler.
- (c) Authorized travelers may not claim mileage for business use of a private vehicle in the following instances:
 - 1. When the traveler is riding with someone who will be claiming reimbursement for the vehicle's use from the County or another source;
 - 2. When the traveler has been assigned a County Vehicle for home retention (excluding law enforcement vehicles, whether marked or unmarked), or is receiving an allowance or lump sum for mileage, unless specifically provided for in the terms of their agreement or contract with the County or by Board resolution.
- (d) County employee mileage to the regular place of work from home, and back, is considered commuting and may not be claimed.
- (e) County employee mileage to a temporary work location from home, and back, is considered commuting and may not be claimed except in the following cases:
 - 1. If the County employee is required to report to the regular place of work before reporting to the temporary work location, he or she is eligible for mileage from the regular place of work to the temporary work location; and

2. If the County employee is required to report to the regular place of work after working at the temporary work location and before going home, he or she is eligible for mileage from the temporary work location to the regular place of work.
- (f) Mileage in conjunction with authorized County travel to and from the authorized destination shall be based on the distance to the destination from the traveler's home or the regular place of work, whichever is shorter, except in any the following cases:
1. If the traveler is required to report to his or her regular work location before leaving, he or she is eligible for mileage to the authorized destination from the work location;
 2. If the traveler is required to report to his or her regular work location before returning home, he or she is eligible for mileage based on the distance from the authorized destination to the work location;
 3. If the traveler is in "on-call" status and is called back to work, the traveler is eligible for mileage reimbursement based on the distance from the traveler's home to the work location
2. County Vehicle Transportation
 - (a) Travelers using a County vehicle for traveling shall not be eligible for reimbursement for mileage.
 - (b) Travelers required to fuel a County vehicle at their own expense due to the unavailability of a county-authorized fueling site, or for other reasons deemed justified by the department head or designee, may be reimbursed for the actual fuel costs subject to presentation of receipt(s).
 - (c) If the County vehicle experiences mechanical failure, the traveler shall follow the rules set forth by Fleet Management.
 3. Rental Vehicle Transportation
 - (a) Vehicles may be rented for transportation at the destination point when the traveler travels to the destination via commercial common carrier and the cost of the rental will be less than the charge for shuttle or taxi service to and from the carrier termination point to the function or hotel accommodations.

- (b) Vehicles may be rented for transportation to the destination point when the cost of the rental will be less than other reasonable and available modes of transportation.
 - (c) If more than one traveler from the same department is traveling to the same function, only as many rental vehicles as are needed to accommodate all travelers may be claimed.
 - (d) The traveler shall choose the least expensive size and mileage limits appropriate to the use required, as determined by the department head or designee. Rental cars shall be refueled prior to return to the rental agency to reduce cost to the County, except when the traveler is escorting a person who is under County supervision by an employee of the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Probation Department, or Health and Human Services Agency
 - (e) Rental cars shall be returned to the renting location and on time to avoid additional charges.
 - (f) The traveler shall waive additional vehicle insurance provided by the rental company.
4. Commercial Carrier Transportation
- (a) Travelers shall seek and attempt to use the lowest rates available for the type of commercial carrier service being utilized. Whenever possible, travelers should take advantage of flight arrangements that minimize County cost (for example, purchasing a round trip ticket may be less expensive than two one-way tickets). No reimbursement will be provided for travel agent fees, unless the use of such services is a requirement to conduct County business.
 - (b) Claims for travel via commercial carrier shall be limited to the actual cost of travel at economy rates. A traveler may upgrade a ticket; however, the difference in cost for such upgrade, including upgrades to allow early check-in, is the responsibility of the traveler. The County will not reimburse any type of travel insurance unless the department head requests the traveler to purchase cancellation coverage. Reasonable baggage charges, if imposed by the airline, on the first checked bag are reimbursable. The department head or designee may authorize additional baggage fees when employees are required to travel with equipment that is required to perform their duties, and which must be checked.

- (c) Travelers may retain frequent flyer and hotel rewards and similar program benefits. However, participation in these programs must not influence flight or hotel selection, which would result in incremental cost to the County beyond the lowest available cost unless the difference is paid by the traveler. Free tickets or cash allowances for volunteering to be denied timely boarding may be retained by the traveler but no additional cost to the County or interruption of County work is allowed and any additional time required to complete the trip shall be considered personal time.
- (d) If travel plans change, requiring a ticket change that incurs a fee and/or fare increase, reimbursement for such costs will be provided only if it can be demonstrated that the change was in the best interest of the County or was necessary to avoid undue burden on the traveler. Such reimbursement shall be subject to department head approval.
- (e) If credits are issued by airlines for non-refundable tickets due to canceled travel, the department shall be responsible for tracking these credits and using them for subsequent employee travel.

5. Other Transportation Expenses

- (a) The following necessary transportation expenses may be claimed at actual cost when directly related to transporting the traveler to and from the business destination point:
 - (i) Taxi, rideshare services, shuttle, ferry, or public transit fares;
 - (ii) Parking fees
 - Airport long-term parking is preferred for travel exceeding 24 hours. Department head approval is required for alternate parking arrangements that are necessary due to safety concerns or to ensure the security of county vehicles and equipment. A traveler choosing alternate parking without department head approval will be reimbursed at the long-term parking rate.
 - Valet parking will only be reimbursed if it is required by the lodging venue. If a traveler chooses valet parking due to safety concerns or security of county vehicles

and equipment when other, less expensive options are available, reimbursement will be subject to department head approval.

(iii) Bridge or road tolls (actual cost, not including penalties or fees);

(iv) Reasonable costs for snow chain installation and removal; and

(v) Other actual transportation expenses determined to be reasonable and necessary by the department head or designee.

(b) The following transportation expenses may not be claimed:

(i) Traffic and parking violations, including fines for non-payment of bridge or road tolls;

(ii) Repairs on non-County vehicles;

(iii) Mileage for personal trips while on County business;

(iv) Purchase cost of snow chains;

(v) Gratuities for taxi or rideshare services and

(vi) Other actual transportation expenses determined to be unreasonable or unnecessary by the department head.

IV. Meal Expenses

A. Eligibility for Meal Expense Reimbursement

1. Meal expenses, within maximum allowable rates set forth herein, may be reimbursed for out-of-county travel, and for in-County overnight travel.

2. Generally, meals will not be provided for in-County travel; however, a department head (required for non-county personnel) or designee (for county personnel and volunteers) may approve meals for in-County travel or other activities under special circumstances, which may include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. Employees and volunteers are participating in a Search and Rescue mission or training exercise;

b. An employee from one slope of the county is required to spend all or part of the workday on the other slope, subject to the provisions of section IV.A.5 of this policy.

- c. Contractors, consultants, or employees from other agencies are assisting with a county recruitment by serving on an interview panel;
 - d. Employees, volunteers, and employees of other agencies are working in the Emergency Operations Center during an emergency.
- 3. Travelers on out-of-County business travel that requires overnight lodging are eligible to claim reimbursement for meals taken out-of-County. Reimbursement for full days (at least 12 hours) of travel shall be provided as a per diem lump sum, which covers all meals taken by the traveler for each full day. The per diem rate shall be equal to the maximum federal per diem meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) rate established by the General Services Administration (GSA). The per diem rate includes taxes and gratuities.
- 4. For out-of-County business that is conducted on one business day, if the traveler's actual time for the day is estimated to equal or exceed 12 hours (including work time, the lunch period and round-trip travel time), the traveler is eligible to receive the full per diem reimbursement amount for that day.
- 5. For partial days (less than 12 hours) spent on out-of-County travel, whether or not lodging is included, individual meals may be claimed in accordance with the following guidelines:
 - (a) Breakfast, when travel time begins two hours or more before the start time for the traveler's regular work schedule for that day;
 - (b) Lunch, when travel time:
 - (i) ends five or more hours past the start time of the traveler's regular work schedule for that day (example: a traveler whose regular schedule is 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. returns from travel after 1:00 p.m.); or
 - (ii) begins five or more hours before the end time of the traveler's regular work schedule for that day (example: a traveler whose regular schedule is 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. leaves for a trip before 12:00 p.m.).
 - (c) Dinner, when travel time extends two hours or more past the end time for the traveler's regular work schedule for that day.

6. Reimbursement rates for individual meals shall be at the individual meal rate for that individual meal as established by the GSA.
7. Reimbursement may exceed the prescribed individual meal rate if the meal is being served as a part of the authorized event and the cost of the meal is itemized separately from the event's registration or attendance fees. For example, the registration fee for a multi-day conference includes lunches but an optional dinner is offered on one night at an additional cost.
8. Reimbursement may exceed the prescribed individual meal rate when a group meal is provided, and when approved by the department head or designee. Examples include meals provided to Search and Rescue volunteers working on a mission or training exercise and meals provided to emergency workers.
9. Unless specifically approved by the department head or designee, a traveler may not claim reimbursement for any meal which is provided, or otherwise available, to the traveler as part of the function, whether or not there is an actual charge for the meal. For example, if lunch is provided at the function, the traveler may not claim a per diem allowance or request reimbursement for eating elsewhere. Receipts will be required for reimbursement of alternate meals authorized by the department head or designee. For purposes of this section, continental breakfast and breakfast included in lodging rates and meals provided during airline or other commercial carrier travel do not constitute provided meals and shall not be deducted from the per diem allowance.
10. A traveler may not claim reimbursement for a meal that was paid for by someone else.
11. As required by California Government Code 53232.2 Board of Supervisors members must provide receipts for all meals and will be reimbursed at the appropriate per diem amount or the actual expense, whichever is less.

V. Lodging Expenses

A. Eligibility for Lodging

1. Travelers are not eligible to claim reimbursement for lodging for in-County travel, unless authorized by a department head or designee when assigned activities require the traveler to

spend one or more nights in an area of the County that is distant from their place of residence (e.g., western slope County Employee assigned to 2-day activity in South Lake Tahoe).

2. For out-of-County business that is conducted on one business day, if the traveler's actual time for the day is estimated to equal or exceed 12 hours (including work time, the lunch period and round-trip travel time), then the traveler will have the option of securing one night's lodging at either the beginning or end of the trip. Illustration: A County Employee who resides in South Lake Tahoe is required to attend a one-day business meeting in Sacramento. The County employee estimates that the total time for the day without obtaining lodging would be 14 hours (8 hours of meetings, 1 hour for lunch and 5 hours for round-trip travel). The employee will have the option of securing one night's lodging in Sacramento, either the night before the meeting, or after conclusion of the meeting.
3. Travelers are not eligible to claim reimbursement for lodging costs when staying overnight as a guest of friends or relatives.
4. Lodging expenses shall be claimed at either the actual cost of the lodging (limited to the single occupancy rate for a single room) or the County's maximum lodging rate (Federal Per Diem Rate established by GSA), whichever is less. Taxes and resort fees are in addition to the Federal Per Diem Rate.
5. Lodging costs may exceed the County's maximum lodging rate in the following situations:
 - (a) The authorized event is to be held at the particular hotel or events are scheduled for evening hours, or
 - (b) The CAO has given advance written authorization.
6. Except when registering for lodging at a pre-arranged group rate in conjunction with a conference or meeting, County Travelers shall request the government rate or lowest available eligible rate when making lodging arrangements.
7. Travelers are responsible for canceling hotel rooms before the cancellation period ends and should record the cancellation number in case of disputes. Travelers will not be reimbursed for

“no-show” hotel charges unless there are unavoidable reasons for not canceling the room and the department head has determined that the reasons are valid.

VI. Advance Payments

After travel has been authorized, departments are encouraged to pre-pay expenses, to the extent feasible, using a County credit card, and to provide travelers with County credit cards (subject to credit card use policy) when traveling; however, when this option is not available or practical, an advance may be requested.

- A. The Auditor may provide advance funds for estimated “out of pocket” expenses up to seventy-five percent (75%) Advances will not be issued in amounts less than \$100 or more than \$1,000. The “out of pocket” expenses may include per diem allowances, individual meals, taxi and public transportation, lodging, parking, and registration costs, but does not include mileage reimbursement for the use of a personal vehicle.
- B. A County credit card may not be used for expenses for which the traveler has received an advance.

VII. Actual Travel Costs Exceeding Estimates

When actual travel costs exceed the estimated costs by more than 2% or \$10.00, whichever is greater, the payment must be approved by the original approving authority

VIII. Compliance and Claim Processing

- A. It is the responsibility of the claimant to understand and follow all policies and procedures herein in order to receive reimbursement for mileage, travel, and expense claims. The failure to properly complete any form or follow any policy or procedure may result in the return of a claim without reimbursement.
- B. Requests for travel authorization and reimbursement shall be processed using forms specified by the County Auditor-Controller and Chief Administrative Office.
- C. Department Heads are responsible for ensuring that claims for reimbursement are submitted to the Auditor-Controller’s Office in a timely fashion, preferably within 30 days following completion of the travel.

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT

Chief Administrative Office

DATES ISSUED AND REVISED; SUNSET DATE

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