



# TRAVEL POLICY

## GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

Travel in support of a TEES mission is essential and therefore it is the responsibility of the TEES Fiscal Office to provide flexible and expeditious payments while maintaining strict adherence to any applicable state, system, federal or sponsor requirements. TEES must minimize the amount of travel expenses by ensuring that each travel arrangement is the most costeffective considering all relevant circumstances. At TEES, travel payments will be based on the travel policy associated with the account it will be charged against. On most local funds this policy will apply. Projects administered by Sponsored Research Services (SRS) will either follow this policy, the Federal travel policy, State policy or if specific travel guidelines are included in the terms of a contract or grant, the provisions of that contract or grant will govern the reimbursement (referred to as Special Sponsor Guidelines). Please check with your SRS Project Administrator if you do not know which policy to follow on your SRS sponsored dollars. **On State dollars** (FAMIS accounts that start with a 1 and any sponsor that require State guidelines to be followed) **reimbursements are subject to the State of Texas Travel Management Program and TexTravel**. Federal, Special Sponsor and State policies can differ greatly from this one.

Each traveler traveling on accounts that follow the TEES Travel Reimbursement Policy should be familiar with this policy prior to travel to ensure that costs will be reimbursable. Lack of proper documentation may result in non-reimbursable expenses to the traveler and a delay in processing the travel expense report. It is the traveler's responsibility to report his/her actual travel expenses in accordance with System ethics regulation and in accordance with the regulations set forth in this policy.

The reimbursement policy is based on documentation of reasonable and actual expenses. Some expenses must be supported by original receipts (monthly credit card statements or credit card receipts alone are not acceptable as backup documentation). Others must be documented by the traveler and submitted as a claim for reimbursement. A cost is reasonable in its nature or amount, if it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the costs. In determining the reasonableness of a given cost, consideration shall be given to:

- Whether the cost is of a type generally recognized as ordinary and necessary for the operation of the organization or the performance of the award.
- The restraints or requirements imposed by such factors as generally accepted sound business practices, arm's length bargaining, Federal, System and State laws and regulations, and terms and conditions of the award.
- Whether the individuals concerned acted with prudence in the circumstances, considering their responsibilities to TEES.

An expense report is submitted by a state employee for reimbursement of travel expenses related to official state business after the travel has occurred. All travel reimbursements will be processed in the Concur system. Each travel expense report must be for only one trip.

The intent of this policy is to ensure that reimbursements comply with IRS accountable plan rules. Following an accountable plan eliminates the need for travelers to report reimbursements as income on their personal tax returns. The IRS outlines accountable plan rules as follows:

1. Your expenses must have a business connection – that is, you must have paid or incurred deductible expenses while performing services as an employee of your employer.
2. You must adequately account to your employer for these expenses within a reasonable period of time.
3. You must return any excess reimbursement or allowance within a reasonable period of time.

Travel expense reports not submitted within 90 days of the end date of travel will be taxable income to the employee. This action will result in additional payroll taxes and benefits being charged to both the traveler and the department. A [“Request for Tax Withholding on Non-Salary Compensation Items”](#) form will need to be completed each time taxation is needed. Item codes 30 and 31 apply to this situation. Be sure to attach the signed form to the Concur expense report.

## **APPROVALS**

All employee and student travel (excluding virtual conferences where travel does not actually take place) must have prior approval. Employee travel requires a Concur Travel Request (TR). All foreign trips require the Concur TR to be approved seven days prior to travel beginning.

If there is any doubt as to the allowability of the trip on sponsored funds or of the need for prior sponsor approval, the SRS Project Administrator should be contacted. Unallowable costs may result in personal expense to the traveler and/or the Principal Investigator.

All expense reports are submitted through Concur and will electronically route to approvers.

## **ADVANCES**

Employees and departments are encouraged to utilize the University / Agency Travel cards (CBT) to pay for all reimbursable travel expenses. Therefore, TEES issues advances to employees in support of official business for a very limited number of business activities. An advance can be issued if the destination is such that service providers (food, lodging, auto rental, etc.) do not honor the agency issued credit cards. Travelers may request funds only for the reasonably estimated, ordinary and necessary business costs that will be incurred.

## **REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL EXPENSES**

When combining personal travel with business travel, payment will be based on the least expensive and reasonable means of transportation to the business location. Meals and lodging are limited to the business portion of the trip. Generally, the dates of the conference or meeting and one travel day before and after are allowable for reimbursement. Any additional days must be documented with a business purpose. Reimbursement of meal and lodging expenses for one or more additional days is allowable ~~3~~ when the purpose of the additional days is to reduce overall travel costs and quotes are provided that prove the cost savings.

A cancellation or change fee is reimbursable only if the charge is incurred for a business-related reason, natural disaster, or a sick leave eligible personal emergency/illness. If your division chooses to pay or

reimburse for a change fee/cancellation that is not documented to comply with one of the above three choices, the expense will only be allowed on certain accounts, see the [TEES Expenditure Guidelines Grid](#).

## **DOMESTIC TRAVEL**

### **TRANSPORTATION**

If a rental vehicle or private automobile is used for out-of-state business travel for purposes other than transporting equipment, materials or conserving costs, an amount not to exceed the cumulative economy airfare will be allowable only for the owner of the automobile. Attach advance quote for economy airfare to the business destination if reason is lower total cost. Lodging, meals and parking are allowed based on what the traveler would normally incur with air travel.

#### **Rental Vehicle**

Rental vehicles should be used to obtain economical or practical transportation, i.e., when it would cost more to travel by privately owned vehicle, taxi, bus, etc. It is recommended to use rental vehicles due to the personal liability issues. The receipt must separately itemize all charges, including the starting and ending dates of the rental, the name of the renter and any other charges. Proof of payment is required. In order to minimize costs, travelers are encouraged to choose standard class cars or lower whenever possible, as well as, to use the contracted vendors. When state or TEES contracted rates are not used, the Fiscal Office may request additional justification. Contract vendors are indicated in the Concur booking tool as preferred vendors and will include the contract rates.

As employees of the State of Texas, travelers are exempt from the 10% Texas motor vehicle rental tax. Reimbursement / payment of the 10% Texas Motor Vehicle Rental Tax is not allowed on TEES funds. The exemption form must be presented to the rental car company when the car is picked up.

If the car class used is above full size, the traveler must provide a justification for use of that class.

An additional driver fee is reimbursable only if the second person is traveling on TEES business.

If the car is retained for personal leave days, the rental fee must be reimbursed proportionately to the business days. Make sure the rental car gas is also prorated.

Charges for Frequent Flyer Bonus Program and rental car upgrades such as satellite radio are unallowable.

The cost of LDW (loss-damage waiver or comprehensive) and liability coverage obtained through the rental car company is reimbursable and included on most state contract rentals. If you rent a vehicle from a non-contract rental car vendor, insurance may or may not be included in the base rental rate. Inquire at the time of rental if the contract insurance coverage is included. If it is not, you must purchase the LDW and liability insurance. Liability insurance supplement, personal accident insurance, safe trip insurance or personal effects insurance are NOT allowable. The vehicle should be rented in the traveler's name and therefore, personal automobile insurance policy(s) should be reviewed for adequate coverage as determined by the traveler.

## **Privately Owned Vehicles**

Travel using privately owned vehicles may be necessary to save time, transport equipment, or reduce cost when a number of persons are traveling together. Out of State mileage cannot exceed the equivalent of economy/coach airfare, except for transportation of materials or equipment.

Mileage will be reimbursed at the rate set by the Internal Revenue Service for business travel. Current rates can be found at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100715>. This rate covers all fuel, maintenance, insurance, transportation, and operating costs. Damage to a privately owned vehicle used for TEES business is covered by the individual's private insurance, costs for which are included in the mileage reimbursement. TEES does not assume responsibility for deductibles or other uninsured loss to the vehicle. Gasoline purchases cannot be claimed if already claiming mileage.

The number of miles traveled by an employee for state business may be determined by either:

- a) Concur mileage calculator, or
- b) Actual odometer readings with specific point to point itemization, or

Mileage for traveling between the place of lodging and the place of entertainment, visiting friends/family, sightseeing, or shopping is not reimbursable (including selecting a restaurant far from lodging without business reason for the selection).

Mileage will be calculated to and from the traveler's headquarters to the business destination or from an alternate location such as residence, if applicable (such as traveling to the airport on a weekend).

Toll, bridge, ferry, and tunnel fees are also reimbursable. The supporting documentation for the reimbursement of an expense must list each day the expense was incurred, and the amount of the expense incurred each day. Based on IRS guidelines, receipts are required if \$75 or more.

## **Motorcycles**

The use of privately-owned motorcycles is reimbursable at the IRS approved rate. See <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100715> for current rates.

## **Commercial Air Transportation**

Economy/coach or other special discount fares are to be used when available. If business or first class airfare is required to accommodate a disability or special need. The disability must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. The medical authorization will be retained in a secure file and will not be attached to the expense report. Please work with Human Resources on these matters. Business or first class airfare is not allowed on most TEES accounts. In order to be paid from specific TEES funds, a business reason must be acknowledged and approved by the Department Head. Please refer to the [TEES Expenditure Guidelines Grid](#) for the specific accounts and requirements. SRS written approval is required on accounts they manage. Make sure the Department Head or SRS approval is attached to the expense report.

A paid airline ticket receipt should be attached to the expense report. An itinerary alone is unacceptable. A receipt that has been altered by any person other than the airline is unacceptable. A receipt to which additional information has been added is considered unaltered if the additional information does not conflict with or obscure the original information on the receipt. The name of the employee and airline, the ticket number, the class of transportation, the travel dates, the amount of the airfare, the origin and destination of each flight, and proof of payment must be included on the receipt.

A traveler can be reimbursed for the checked baggage fee for one piece of luggage. A second bag fee will only be reimbursed if a specific business reason is stated on the expense report. Overweight and oversized baggage fees will also require a business reason to be reimbursable. Receipts are required if the expense is \$75 or more.

If changes to airfare result in non-refundable expenses, a statement as to what steps were taken to obtain a refund or to minimize the costs should be included. These reasons should be related to business or for other reasons beyond the traveler's control.

Airline ticket credits must be used for TEES business travel (or paid back to TEES if the traveler uses for personal travel).

### **Personally-Owned or Rented Aircraft**

Prior notification and approval is required **before** a traveler uses a private aircraft. The traveler should provide the Fiscal Office with the following information:

- Destination and purpose of trip
- Dates of travel
- Number/names of passengers
- Type of airplane
- Insurance certificate for the airplane
- Explanation why the personal plane is more economical to use rather than a commercial carrier
- Project and Account to which the expense will be charged

If the traveler plans to use the aircraft for more than one trip, all dates and destinations should be included. If allowable, the traveler will be reimbursed using the mileage between the designated headquarters and point of destination. The rate of reimbursement will be based on the State of Texas Travel Allowance Guide. The rates are available at <https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fmx/travel/texttravel/rates/>

### **Taxicab, Shuttle Services, Limousine, Bus, Subways**

Taxi, shuttle services, limousine, bus fares, and subways must include the point to point description, date, and dollar amount. Tips should be reasonable and based on the service received. The rule of thumb at TEES is 20%. Amounts above that may require additional information. Based on IRS guidelines, receipts are required for any single fare or expense \$75 or more.

Limousine / private car service from city to city, such as from College Station to Houston, can only be used when other practical means (i.e., rental vehicle, personal vehicle, shuttle, bus) are not available, or the limousine service is more economical. An explanation of why limousine / car service was used must be provided.

### **Train**

Travelers must use coach/economy class accommodations for all train travel. Refer to business or first class airfare for guidance on authorizations and accounts to pay for fares above coach. For each expense, include the point to point description, date, and dollar amount. Itemized receipts must be submitted when \$75 or more.

### **Parking**

In most instances, parking expenses incurred while traveling in a state-owned or leased motor vehicle, a personally owned or leased motor vehicle, or a rented motor vehicle is reimbursable.

A parking expense incurred by an individual while dropping off or picking up a traveler at the airport is reimbursable.

The supporting documentation for the reimbursement of a parking expense must list each day the expense was incurred and the amount of the expense incurred each day, as well as the locations where the expense was incurred. Based on IRS guidelines, receipts are required if \$75 or more.

## **LODGING**

Itemized receipts for lodging are required. The receipt needs to include name and address of the commercial lodging establishment, name of the traveler, single room rate, daily itemization of charges, and proof of payment. With valid lodging receipts, travelers may be reimbursed for the actual costs of reasonable and necessary lodging at single room rates outside of their headquarter city. Travelers are encouraged to review GSA rates and obtain lodging near that dollar amount.

Remember, as employees of the State of Texas, travelers are exempt from Texas state hotel occupancy taxes. In order to take advantage of this, the traveler must present an exemption certificate to the hotel desk clerk at the time of check-in. Many hotels will not honor the exemption if it is presented at check-out. The Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate can be found on the [TEES Travel website](#). Reimbursements for Texas hotel occupancy tax charged on lodging will be made only in those instances where the traveler attempted to claim exemption but was denied by the lodging establishment. In this case, we must report the hotel to the State Comptroller's Office.

## **MEALS**

Travel meal reimbursements are for the traveler's meals only. Reimbursement includes the actual cost of reasonable and necessary food, non-alcoholic beverages, gratuities, taxes, and other incidental expenses. Alcoholic beverages are unallowable and must be deducted before submitting a claim.

The traveler may be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals up to the applicable Federal domestic maximum GSA rate for the location (no receipts are required in this case). See domestic rates at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. Mark the appropriate GSA meal rate on the Concur expense report header.

If the city is not specifically listed on the GSA site, then use the rate listed for the county in which the city is located. If neither is listed, use the "Standard Rate" for that state. Use the GSA lodging location if lodging is not at the duty point.

If a single day of travel meals exceeds the GSA maximum for the location then with the full day's meal receipts, travelers may be reimbursed for the actual costs of reasonable and necessary meals and gratuities for that day. In other words, the entire day's meals must be substantiated with receipts (or imported from an agency credit card directly into Concur) if the GSA maximum is exceeded.

An employee may not be reimbursed for meals when traveling on official business that does not require an overnight stay unless the meal is considered a business meal and is substantiated as such. Business meals can be reimbursed through Concur by using the TEES Business Meal/Food form ~~to~~ or documenting the IRS required five W's: who, what, where, when, and why on the receipt or Concur expense report. Keep in mind that business meals are exempt from Texas sales tax if paid on an agency issued card (or pay the tax on an allowable account per the expenditure grid).

Certain incidental expenses are covered as part of the meal reimbursement. The Federal Travel Regulations describes incidental expenses as:

- Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel maids, other hotel workers, stewards or stewardesses and others on ships.

## **TELEPHONE CALLS**

Travelers are expected to use the most economical means of making business phone calls while traveling. Travelers will be reimbursed for phone calls that are reasonable and necessary for conducting business (calls to family are not considered business related). A detailed copy of the communications bill with all business related charges denoted by underlining the specific business charge is needed for reimbursement. The business purpose of the call(s) must be documented. The methodology used for calculating reimbursement will be the total charges, including surcharges and taxes, prorated by the percentage of business use (only up to the actual cost of service). TEES is not responsible for reimbursing equipment charges due to plan initiation, or through lost, stolen or damaged equipment.

## **INTERNET CONNECTIONS**

Travelers will be reimbursed internet connection charges that are reasonable and necessary for conducting business. A receipt is required when expense is \$75 or more.

## **LAUNDRY**

Expenses incurred for laundry, cleaning and pressing of clothing are reimbursable within the United States (including Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. Territories, and Possessions). However, the employee must incur a minimum of four (4) consecutive nights at the place of lodging (on business travel) to qualify. A receipt is required when the expense is \$75 or more.

## **CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**

Supporting documentation for registration fees for conferences, meetings, etc. should include a receipt from the conference sponsor with the full name of the conference, dates of the conference and name of attendee, along with proof of payment. If optional meals are purchased, please be aware that they are part of the meal expense for that day. If a membership was purchased along with the conference registration, include a [Membership Form](#) (or the level detail captured by the form) with the Expense Report.

## **MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES**

Based on IRS guidelines any single expense for \$75 or more for any other allowable miscellaneous expense must have a receipt in order to be reimbursed. Itemization needs to be provided for each.

### **Reimbursable**

Examples of allowable miscellaneous expenses incurred while in travel status include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Miscellaneous supplies (not office supplies)
- Fees for traveler's checks/currency exchange. When a loss is incurred in currency exchange, the loss may be claimed.
- Portage fees, special transportation, and tips for handling business equipment and materials
- Postage for official mail
- Gasoline for rental cars
- Fees for money orders and/or certified checks
- Transaction fees for use of automated teller machines (ATMs) – amount of the ATM withdrawals may not exceed the amount of funds approved for authorized travel
- Passport and/or visa fees
- Costs of photographs for passports and visa
- Foreign country exit fees

### **Not Reimbursable**

Examples of expenses that will **NOT** be reimbursed include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Entertainment expenses and related social activities such as sightseeing tours and dances
- Frequent flyer mileage fees
- Costs incurred by unreasonable failure to cancel transportation or hotel reservations
- Fines for automobile violations including parking tickets

- Gasoline purchases for personal vehicles when claiming mileage or gasoline for rental cars on personal days.
- Personal items purchased due to lost/delayed baggage
- Lost or stolen tickets, cash, or property
- Hotel movie rentals and airline headsets
- Health club fees
- Magazine, newspapers, and books unrelated to business
- Personal credit card delinquency fees or finance charges
- Office Supplies not related to the travel purpose of the trip

## **FOREIGN TRAVEL**

Foreign travel by any state employee on state business must be for the benefit of the State of Texas and any personal benefit thereby accrued must be solely incidental to the official purpose of the travel. It is the obligation of both the individual employee who is traveling and his or her supervisor to ensure that all foreign travel conforms to this mandate.

Receipts submitted in a foreign currency are to be converted to the U.S. dollar equivalency of the date expenses were incurred (Concur automatically converts to U.S. dollars when the expense is entered in foreign currency) or submit a credit card statement showing the U.S. dollar amount. Expenses charged to the CBT card will automatically be converted to U.S. dollars.

Sponsors differ in defining the term “foreign” so when traveling on SRS managed accounts, travelers should contact the SRS Project Administrator to be sure the contemplated travel is correctly classified.

## **APPROVAL**

It is required that all foreign travel by state employees on state business must be approved in advance via a Concur TR. This includes travel at no charge to TEES. State funds cannot be used to reimburse foreign travel expenses.

It is the responsibility of every employee to check their foreign destination (including Canada and Mexico) for any Travel Warnings/Alerts when requesting approval for foreign travel. Travel Warnings, as defined by the U.S. Department of State, are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government’s ability to assist U.S. citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff.

Sponsoring agencies may also require prior approval. It is the responsibility of the traveler to contact their SRS Project Administrator. The approval request should be submitted at least 45 days prior to the anticipated departure date.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

For all transportation categories not specifically listed below, please refer to the domestic allowability and receipt requirements.

## **Rental Vehicles**

Rental vehicles should be used to obtain economical or practical transportation (i.e., when it would cost more to travel by taxi, bus, subway, etc.). When leasing vehicles in foreign countries, it is advisable to purchase all available and reasonable levels of insurance including Personal Accident Liability Insurance (PAI). Itemized receipts are required. Please refer to Domestic Travel sections regarding other allowability and receipt requirements.

## **Air Transportation**

Generally, if a traveler is traveling on funds provided by the federal government, he/she must use a U.S. flag carrier (an airline owned by an American company), regardless of cost or convenience.

If you are scheduling international travel that is federally funded (check with SRS if you are not sure if your sponsor is Federal), you need to follow the Fly America Act which is outlined to in the TEES Federal Travel policy on the [TEES Travel website](#).

Please refer to the Domestic Travel sections of this document regarding other allowability and receipt requirements.

## **LODGING AND MEALS**

Please refer to Domestic Travel sections of this document regarding allowability and receipt requirements. For foreign travel location applicable rates, please obtain current rates from the State Department at [http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem.asp](http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp).

For travel to Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. Territories, and Possessions, please obtain current rates from the Department of Defense at <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/perdiemCalc.cfm>.

## **LAUNDRY**

As laundry/dry cleaning expenses are included in the incidental calculations (part of the meal maximum) outside the United States, separate claims for such expenses are not allowed.

## **ALL OTHER EXPENSE CATEGORIES**

Please refer to Domestic Travel sections of this document regarding allowability and receipt requirements for all other expense categories.