

Office of Research Travel Guidance

The purpose of this is to provide our departments with clarification and guidance on aspects of the university policy surrounding business travel. Additionally, this guidance will serve to remind us all of how important it is for us to ensure state funds are being utilized appropriately, and ensure we are being good stewards of the University's money.

With this in mind, we would like to provide some interpretation, and specific procedural guidance, to clarify how the Office of Research approaches certain aspects of the current travel policy.

Travel Policy:

The university travel policy currently states the following principles:

- 1) University travelers should incur the **lowest reasonable travel expenses** and exercise care to avoid impropriety and/or the appearance of impropriety.
- 2) Ohio State will pay for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by faculty, staff, students, and eligible **guests** for authorized business travel on behalf of the university.
- 3) An individual's daily commute to and from residence and headquarters, is not considered in university business travel status and therefore not eligible for travel expense payments.
- 4) This policy and the [Expenditures](#) policy **apply to all guest travel**.
- 5) Prior to any trip, travelers must obtain **preapproval** to leave headquarters for university business travel. Such approval must be documented (e.g., **eTravel**, business leave, other written approval, etc.) prior to the trip and available for audit and review. Estimated costs, and a **business purpose** associated with the business travel, must be included in the documentation.
 - a. An individual may not approve her/his own travel.
 - b. Individuals who are authorized to approve travel are designated by each unit and detailed in the unit's Delegation of Signature Authority document. Throughout this policy, this approval is referenced as **designated approval authority**.
- 6) Payments for university business travel must be approved by a designated approval authority, and a **T Number** must be issued **prior to the trip**, in order to use university procurement methods (i.e., **PCard**, Purchase Order, or eTravel payments).

Office of Research:

Below, you will find more specific direction on how different aspects of travel will be reviewed and processed:

Airport Parking – The least expensive overnight parking that still allows for reasonable access to the terminal should be used. This is especially important to be applied at Port Columbus where the Red, Blue, Green and Yellow lots are available for all travelers. OR will pay up to \$9.00 per day for parking at CMH.

Personal Travel to the Airport – We will approve mileage to/from the airport. A MapQuest comparison or equivalent will need to be provided. **Uber will only be reimbursed at the UberX rate.**

Per Diem – On travel involving airlines, per diem will be calculated based on reasonable travel time from home or office to the final time of arrival at Port Columbus, unless extenuating circumstances are documented and approved. If a hotel, flight or conference/organization supplies a meal, per diem will not be reimbursable, unless a medical or professional justification is provided by the traveler, and approved by the Unit Director and the Office of Research. The conference registration form and agenda are required to ensure the appropriate amount for per diem reimbursement.

Rental Cars and Mileage Only Travel -- **University travelers should incur the lowest reasonable expense that meets business needs.** Use of an automobile as a primary mode of transportation is authorized only if driving is more economical than any other type of transportation, or if the destination is not otherwise accessible. Mileage will be reimbursed for personal vehicles, as a primary mode of transportation, only if the cost does not exceed the least expensive airfare or rental car expense. A cost comparison must be done in advance, and documentation provided (airfare quote or mileage log), prior to the travel being approved. Additional items to consider when making this comparison may include: per diem, parking, tolls, ground transportation, gasoline, additional airline charges, taxes and additional hotel expenses. **PLEASE** keep in mind, utilizing a rental car is not required. We will only reimburse mileage at the rate of an economy rental car plus gas, if it is the cheaper option. Adjustments can be made to the size of a rental car in situations where multiple individuals will be riding together to the same meeting.

If the traveler chooses to drive their personal vehicle, we will reimburse them at the rate of a rental car, plus gas. Below is the formula to be used:

We will reimburse \$36 per day for rental car + (the amount of mileage traveled/25 mpg * \$2.50 per gallon). For instance, If the traveler travels 300 miles in their personal vehicle, they will only be reimbursed the following: $\$36 + (300 \text{ mile}/25 \text{ mpg or } 12 \text{ gallons} * \$2.50 \text{ or } \$30.00 \text{ total}) = \66.00 .

OSU has contracts in place with National and Enterprise. As such, you will be required to utilize one of these agencies when renting a car. These contracts include DW/CDW/LDW and liability insurance, and should not be purchased separately. The rental car contract number is: XZ38Y09, PIN: OHI.

Renting a car, once the employee has arrived at their destination, will require pre-approval from Office of Research for anyone other than unit directors. Justification for the request is required.

Internet Hotel Access – Will be reimbursed for Office of Research Directors only. For others, a legitimate business need must be provided and approved in advance.

Day Before/Day After Lodging - Lodging the day before or the day after the business event or conference will be reimbursed only if it is appropriate and reasonable.

Additional items to consider when approving travel requests in your unit:

University Travel and Expenditure Policies - Applies to non-employees whose approved travel expenses are eligible to be paid, or reimbursed, by the university.

Lodging – The University will permit payment of lodging expenses at reasonable, single occupancy or standard business room rates. Justification is required for lodging that falls within 1.5 to 2 times the Federal per diem rate. If the room rate is 2 times or more than the Federal rate, an exception is required.

The cost of overnight lodging (room rate and tax only) will be paid if the authorized travel is 45 miles or more from the traveler's home or primary work site.

Payment will be limited to the conference rate when the hotel/motel is the conference/convention site.

Vacation Attached to Business Travel – Reimbursed only for the cost of the business travel.

Traveler needs to submit cost comparison airfare (using the same airline), hotel rates, etc. at the time travel is requested. Vacation time starts or ends when the conference or event starts or concludes.

Spouse/Family Attached to Business Travel - Reimbursed only for the cost of the business travel. Traveler needs to submit comparison hotel rates, etc. at the time travel is requested.

Payment of Expenses for Other Travelers – Travelers are required to pay for and seek reimbursement for their own expenses. However, sometimes a situation presents itself where one individual pays an expense for a group of travelers (ie. shuttle, taxi, etc.). If this should happen, please write an explanation to be included with your reimbursement. Make sure to include the names and T#'s of those travelers for which the expense was paid.

Occasional and non-recurring exceptions to the Travel Policy must be documented in the travel system and approved by the dean, vice president or their designated approval authority.

WHEN IN DOUBT, PLEASE ASK.