

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY
Fauquier County, Virginia

Policy Title: Travel Policy and Procedures
Policy Number: AP-06

Effective Date: July 1, 2017
Supersedes Policy Dated: March 1, 2015

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the standards by which travel is approved for individuals traveling on Fauquier County business using County funds, and applies to both day and overnight travel.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Authorized Travel: Travel to be performed by County employees and members of boards, commissions, and authorities of Fauquier County for which funds are included in the related department budget and approved in advance as outlined in Section IX – Advance Travel Approval, below. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers shall manage the allocation of available resources within the respective department/agency budget to accomplish travel efficiently and effectively throughout the year.
- B. Daily Travel: All travel not requiring overnight accommodations for accomplishing assigned duties or roles.
- C. Extended Travel: All overnight trips to attend meetings, conferences, training, or other work-related functions.
- D. International Travel: Travel to locales outside the 48 contiguous United States, including Alaska, Hawaii, and United States' territories.
- E. Registration Fees: Fees charged for attendance at a conference, convention, seminar, workshop, or educational program for which the employee and the County receive a direct benefit. Registration fees are not fees associated with a certification program for which the employee takes a test or examination at the end of the program that either provides credit towards a professional certification or results in a professional certification.
If the certification program contains both an online and onsite component, only costs associated with the onsite/travel portion of the program should be included in the travel cost estimate.

III. GENERAL POLICIES

- A. Applicability: This policy shall apply to all employees and members of boards, commissions, and authorities of Fauquier County engaged in travel required to conduct Fauquier County business. Employees are not guaranteed attendance at conferences and training seminars. County Administration/Department Heads/Constitutional Officers will determine the appropriateness of all travel undertaken by staff and have the authority to approve or disapprove requests for conferences, training, seminars, and other business travel. Supervisors are encouraged to provide these opportunities appropriately and fairly.

Travel undertaken by sworn officers of the Sheriff's Office for the purposes of prisoner extradition is subject to extradition policies and procedures as contained in the Sheriff's Office Standard Operating Procedures Manual.

B. Responsibility:

1. Each Department Head/Constitutional Officer:

- a. Shall exercise sound and prudent judgment when approving, arranging for, and incurring travel expenditures.
- b. Shall ensure sufficient funds for travel are available within the Department's operating budget.
- c. Shall determine who is eligible for reimbursement for Internet access, if the place of lodging does not provide this service for free.
- d. Shall ensure the refund of any unused travel advance is submitted with the Travel Reimbursement Form to Accounts Payable. In the event the travel advance is not properly accounted for within forty-five (45) calendar days after the trip, the difference may be deducted from the individual's reimbursement or regular pay check.

2. Each individual participating in County-funded travel:

- a. Shall obtain approval prior to making any reservations/travel arrangements in accordance with the expenditure limits and authorization levels outlined in Section IX – Advance Travel Approval, below. When estimating travel-related expenses for advance approval, all expenses are to be itemized on one form; expenses may not be divided between two forms to avoid the expenditure limits as defined in Section IX.

The request for advance approval must comply with the schedule for submission to the Board of Supervisors' agenda, as applicable. If an employee exceeds the expenditure limit without obtaining approval of the County Administrator, or designee, and/or Board of Supervisors prior to scheduling travel, such employee shall be personally responsible for all expenditures exceeding that amount.

Advance approval should be documented on the travel estimate form, but authorization is acceptable by e-mail, if attached to the travel estimate form. This documentation shall be included with the reimbursement request.

- b. Shall make every effort to submit a Travel Reimbursement Form to Accounts Payable within thirty (30) calendar days of return from travel, with all appropriate receipts, conference schedules, details of expenses, explanations, and, if applicable, refund of unused travel advance funds. Receipts are not required for items included in a per diem (meals and incidentals).
- c. Shall ensure proper authorization of reimbursement requests. If the individual incurring travel expenses is a Constitutional Officer, that individual shall request another Constitutional Officer or the County Administrator to review and sign the reimbursement form. Under no circumstances shall:
 - 1) Any individual approve reimbursement of his or her own travel expenses.
 - 2) Any individual ask a subordinate to approve his or her travel expenses.

Requests for reimbursement submitted more than ninety (90) calendar days after travel will not be paid.

- C. Advance Payments: Only registration, per diem, and advance conference fees may be paid prior to travel. All other travel payments shall be in the form of employee reimbursements after travel unless prior approval for additional advance payment is obtained from the County Administrator, or designee. Cash advances for travel are not allowed for individuals with a previous travel advance outstanding more than 14 calendar days after returning from a prior travel assignment. In situations where the advanced amount is more than the actual expenditure total, the employee must reimburse the County within 14 business days of returning from travel.
- D. Excessive Expenses: Persons traveling on official County business will exercise care in incurring expenses to minimize the cost to the County Government.

Excessive and unnecessary expenses will not be reimbursed. Those with authority as specified in Section III-B above will determine if expenses are excessive.

- E. Travel by two or more County designees: When it is known that two or more County employees and/or County representatives will be traveling to the same destination, maximum use shall be made of special group travel discounts, joint use of taxicabs and joint use of County-owned, leased, or privately-owned vehicles. County Government strongly urges such employees to carpool, use commercial transportation, etc., where feasible.
- F. Gasoline Credit Cards: In the event a department has County-issued gasoline credit cards, they may be used when traveling in a County-owned vehicle with the following restrictions:
 - 1. The card may only be used to purchase gas or oil and/or for emergency repairs when it is not practicable to return to the County garage or have the vehicle towed to the County garage. The card may not be used for food, drinks, cash advances, or items for personal use.
 - 2. The card shall be used in compliance with the existing County gasoline contract at the time of travel, including utilizing authorized gasoline providers in accordance with the County contract for out of County fuel purchases, when available.

IV. POLICY ADMINISTRATION

The administration of this policy shall be as follows:

- A. County Administrator shall adopt provisions of policy, set rates of reimbursement, and make any significant alterations.
- B. County Administrator shall implement all provisions of this policy, authorize exceptions as permitted and make changes to operating procedures as necessary.
- C. County Administrator, or designee, approval is required prior to making any travel arrangements when multiple employees in one department plan extended travel, as defined in Section II-C above, to the same event.
- D. Office of Management and Budget will manage this policy for policy compliance, required revisions, and development and/or maintenance of operating procedures.
- E. Finance Department will carry out this policy to ensure travel related payments comply with this policy, maintain payment records, prepare advances and checks, note discrepancies, etc.

V. TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is paid only if it is reasonable and necessary to accomplish the County's business.

- A. County-owned vehicles should be used for daily or extended travel when available and cost beneficial to the department.
- B. Reimbursement for rental vehicles shall be authorized only when necessary, cost effective, or otherwise beneficial to the County. Optional insurance will be at the traveler's expense. Utilization of rental vehicles shall be facilitated through the County's fleet services division, when the rental origination is within the County, to ensure rental vehicles are obtained through existing County contracts or discount opportunities. If County contracts are available for non-County origination, they shall be utilized as well for rental vehicles.
- C. Personal Vehicle: Employees are permitted to use their personally owned automobiles when a County-owned vehicle is not available, or when the use of a personally owned vehicle is cost beneficial to the department. In the event of an accident, the employee's insurance will be sole and primary.
 - 1. When traveling to training, conferences, etc., the distance normally traveled from home to worksite (or the equivalent distance) is not reimbursable.
 - 2. If an employee is required to return to work after going home for the day, the department head, depending on circumstances, may approve mileage reimbursement for the return trip.
 - 3. Daily travel in a personal vehicle is not eligible for reimbursement when:
 - a. Travel occurs between County and/or School facilities located within the Town of Warrenton.
 - b. Each trip does not exceed five (5) miles in total.
- D. Mileage Rate of Reimbursement: The rate of reimbursement is on a per mile driven basis, excluding any mileage non-reimbursable as previously outlined in this policy, at the annually adjusted rate (effective January 1 of each year) found on the Federal General Services Administration (GSA) or Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website. Mileage will be reimbursed at the most economical distance calculation.

GSA (privately owned automobile rate): <https://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100715>
IRS (business rate): <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

It is expected that the most economical and efficient mode and route of travel is used when travel is necessary to accomplish the County's business. Transportation should be shared by employees traveling together whenever possible.

VI. LODGING

Extended travel must be necessary and reasonable to accomplish the County's business to be eligible for reimbursement.

- A. Accommodations will be reimbursed on a single occupancy basis only, unless there is more than one County employee traveling and a room is being shared voluntarily.
- B. Accommodations shall be arranged at (or closest to) the site of business.
- C. Accommodations shall first be booked based on the GSA approved reimbursement rate for the area. If a conference site does not have accommodations available within the GSA rate schedule for the area, accommodations will be reimbursed at the conference rate or government rate offered for the program, plus applicable taxes and fees, whichever is lower and available. A receipt for lodging expenses shall be required and must accompany the Travel Reimbursement form to ensure reimbursement. If the accommodation reimbursement rate is higher than the applicable GSA rate, a justification showing the variance between the GSA rate and the available conference or government rate should be attached to reimbursement request, unless the conference program and the lodging location are the same.
- D. Employees will communicate travel plan changes to the hotel as soon as possible if a confirmed reservation is being held. Since hotels may charge for non-canceled reservations, these charges will not be reimbursed if the traveler is negligent in canceling those reservations.
- E. Reimbursement for lodging expenses when travel is less than 100 miles and/or less than 2 hours travel time from the individual's work site or home, whichever is closest to the destination, shall be made only when the business activity will last more than one working day, or approved in advance as outlined in Section IX – Advance Travel Approval, below.
- F. Federal GSA Lodging Rates can be found on the GSA Per Diem Rates webpage <https://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/104711>, with a drill down option by state or zip code.

VII. PER DIEM ALLOWANCES FOR MEALS AND INCIDENTALS

- A. Employees will be compensated for meals consumed during official travel as indicated below.
1. Daily Travel: The IRS deems reimbursement for meal expenses incurred during daily travel to be a taxable fringe benefit; such reimbursement will be made through the payroll process with appropriate taxes withheld. An employee will be reimbursed for meals as part of daily travel, only if the travel takes place outside of normal business hours and standard commuting time, with approval prior to travel.
 2. Extended Travel: An employee is eligible for reimbursement not to exceed the per diem for the cost of meals, tips and incidentals for each full day of travel at the GSA Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) rate for the travel area. For per diem allowances, travel begins on the day an employee leaves their home, office, or other point of departure and ends on the day the employee returns to their home, office, or other arrival point.
 - a. Per Diems will be reimbursed at the GSA rate on the first and last day of travel, excluding any provided meals, at 75%. For Example, if the daily reimbursement rate is \$54 and lunch is provided at the program, the total allowable reimbursement for the first/last day of travel would be \$30.75, [Calculation is $\$54 - \$13 \text{ lunch} = \$41 * .75 = \30.75].
 - b. Incidentals, including fees, tips, etc., are included in the GSA M&IE rate breakdown.
 - c. GSA per diem rates can be found at <https://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877>, and search by date or zip code.
- B. Non-reimbursable Meals: An employee will not be eligible for per diem or reimbursement at the maximum daily allowance for meals when any or all meals are furnished as a condition of travel. If all meals are provided on a given day(s), the employee will not receive per diem for that day. If less than three meals are furnished, the employee will receive the amount specified for the non-included meal(s). The number of reimbursable meals will be indicated on the Travel Reimbursement form with the date the meal(s) was (were) consumed. Non-reimbursable meals are defined as:
1. Any meal included in a registration or conference fee ultimately paid by the County; or

2. Any meal furnished at no cost to the employee by a school or vendor while attending a course of instruction, if the cost of the meal is ultimately paid for by the County as part of the cost of instruction; or
 3. Any meal furnished by an airline where the cost of the ticket is paid for by the County; or
 4. Any meal(s) furnished by a private individual or firm that serves to replace a meal(s) that would normally be funded as part of the per diem.
 5. Under no circumstances will expenditures for alcohol be reimbursed by County funds.
- C. Personal expenses such as gratuities for maid or room service, valet services, self-entertainment expenses, etc., are not reimbursable and should not be included as part of reimbursement requests.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

- A. Tolls and parking fees are reimbursable.
- B. Internet access, telephone, facsimile, and other business charges will be reimbursed only if an approved business justification is provided with the Travel Reimbursement form.
- C. A receipt is required for these forms of reimbursement claims greater than \$10.00, unless otherwise included in a per diem.

IX. ADVANCE TRAVEL APPROVAL

All travel must be approved in advance in accordance with the following matrix, and not exclusive of any other County policy provisions including but not limited to Procurement and Accounts Payable policies for payment. Additionally, approval by the County Administrator, or designee, is required prior to making any travel arrangements when:

- A. When multiple employees from one or more department(s) will participate in travel and it would create a department closure;
- B. Reimbursement for lodging is requested when travel distance is less than 100 miles and/or less than two (2) hours travel time from the individual's home or work site,

whichever is closest to the destination and will not last longer than one working day; and,

- C. Reimbursement is requested for international travel, or travel outside of the contiguous 48 United States.

Travel By:	Daily Travel	Extended Travel	Total Travel Expenses ≥ \$2,000 but < \$5,000	Total Travel Expenses ≥ \$5,000
Departmental Staff	Department Head/Constitutional Officer		County Administrator	Board of Supervisors
Department Heads Registrar	Self	County Administrator		Board of Supervisors
Director, Library Director, DSS	Self	Chairman of appropriate Board	County Administrator	Board of Supervisors
County Attorney	Self	Chairman, Board of Supervisors		Board of Supervisors
County Administrator	Self	Chairman, Board of Supervisors		Board of Supervisors
Constitutional Officers	Self	County Administrator		Board of Supervisors
Member, BOS	Self	Chairman, Board of Supervisors		Board of Supervisors
Non-BOS Board Members (including those appointed or assigned by non-County entities) BOS Committees BOS Commissions	County Administrator			Board of Supervisors
Court System Staff	Judge of Applicable Court	County Administrator		Board of Supervisors

X. POLICY EXCEPTIONS AND CONDITIONS

- A. Travel funded by grant or supplemental funding programs:
1. Advanced approval for grant or supplemental funding travel shall not be given prior to the grant being approved and appropriated in accordance with the County grant management and/or budget adjustment policies, as applicable.
 2. When grant or supplemental funding travel requirements do not conform to the above County travel policy provisions, the grant requirements should be

followed and documented as part of both the advance travel approval and reimbursement process. All effort should be made at the time of the funding request to align the travel requirements to the County's policy.