Traveling on University Business
MNPI Center

TRAVELING ON UNIVERSITY BUSINESS

Policies are for employees and non-employees (faculty, staff, students and University visitors).

General Policy

- Travelers are responsible to ensure that travel expenses are for valid University business related purposes, are following University policies and procedures, and are a prudent use of public and University funds.
- Prior to travel and before any reimbursement requests are submitted travelers are required by MNPI policy to fill out the [http://mnpifm.umn.edu/fmi/iwp/cgi-db=staffp-loadframes](http://mnpifm.umn.edu/fmi/iwp/cgi-db=staffp-loadframes) Travel Authorization request.
- Employees (faculty, staff and students) are expected to choose the least costly method of transportation that meets the traveler’s scheduling and business needs.
- All international travel must be registered prior to travel dates. [http://policy.umn.edu/finance/travel-proc04](http://policy.umn.edu/finance/travel-proc04)
- Original itemized receipts are required for all travel expenses over $25 EXCEPT meals and incidentals, which are reimbursed according to the per diem rate. Conference registration receipts should include name of conference, dates, and location.
- If a receipt cannot be obtained or is lost, mark the receipt is missing box on the Employee Expense Worksheet and use the description to explain the expense and why receipt could not be provided. *Itemized airfare, lodging and group hospitality receipts are always required to receive reimbursement.*
- Sponsored funds for travel should follow the most restrictive applicable policy (University policy or sponsor policy).
- Travel expenses must be approved by a person who has the authority to approve or deny payment of travel. Normally the approver is one level senior to the traveler, but it may also be another person who has been delegated to approve or deny travel.
  - All Department Head reimbursements, and PCard purchases supporting Dept Heads, must be approved by the Medical School CFO in the Dean’s Office. Route all Department Head Expense Worksheets and PCard Reports with backup documentation to Anita Thielman (MMC 293, Mayo C617, thiel007@umn.edu), who will review for accuracy and policy compliance. An accountant in the Department must review Expense Worksheets and PCard Reports for accuracy and initial/sign off prior to routing to the Dean’s Office.
- Expenses incurred by a spouse or guest are not reimbursable expenses unless there is a business purpose for the spouse to attend. (See Dept. Administrator – Policies in Question for more information.) Examples of acceptable business purposes are:
  - Faculty Recruitment (when the recruit’s spouse attends)
  - Donor Relations (when the donor’s spouse attends)
  - Individual Recognition Events, such as retirement or recognition of an award received
- Complete justification of travel is required. This includes the *Benefit to the University and the 5 W’s – Who, What, Where, When, Why.* Any reimbursement request that does not address all components will be returned. *(Example: Jane Doe attended the 2011 AAMC Conference in Denver, CO from Nov. 4-7 to get up to date information on new educational teaching methods which will be applied to the curriculum for the medical students at the U of MN.)*
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The American Express Corporate Travel Card

• Is available for employees traveling on University business to pay for travel expenses, including airfare, hotels, meals, car rental, conference registration, ground transportation, and airport parking.
• Cards are available to any academic or administrative staff member who has obtained approval from their Administrative Head.
• Cardholder must comply with University travel policies.
• Cardholder has sole liability for charges made and payment in full is due according to the terms and conditions of the financial institution.
• After travel, an Employee Expense Worksheet (form UM1612) is completed and all receipts are submitted to the department accounting staff. The traveler is reimbursed for the expenses and is then responsible for paying the credit card bill in full.

Travel Documentation/Reimbursement Request

• Non-sponsored travel reimbursement requests should be made within 60 days of the conclusion of travel. If requests are made after 60 days, the traveler runs the risk of having their travel denied for non-compliance. In the Departments, this determination is made by the Administrative Center Director or the Medical School CFO as a backup.
• Sponsored project travel reimbursement should be submitted within 60 days, or before the end date of the grant (for travel incurred near the end of a grant).
• If you combine personal with business travel, the University cannot incur any additional expense. You must submit a detailed accounting with your travel documents that show there is no additional expense to the University. Any additional expenses incurred will be the sole responsibility of the traveler.
• Foreign travel expenses must be converted to U.S. dollars using the rate in effect for each date of travel. Documentation indicating what exchange rate was used should be included. The University’s preferred website for exchange rate conversion is OANDA. If purchases were made via credit card, use the exchange rate provided by the credit card company.
• Conference agendas should be included as backup in order to substantiate expenses incurred while traveling on University business.

Unsubstantiated/Unallowable Expenses

• Reimbursable / Non-reimbursable Travel-related Expenses grid is located at http://policy.umn.edu/finance/travel-appi
• Alcohol is not reimbursable
• Reimbursements that will be made by outside 3rd parties should not be included for reimbursement. The 3rd party should reimburse traveler directly. No expenses or payments should flow through the University. University reimbursement is allowed only when reimbursement has not been and will not be received from any other source.
• If travel expenses are paid by the University (through PCard or direct purchase) but are not allowable according to the travel policy, or are not appropriately substantiated, the following will occur to recover the funds:
  o Traveler pays the University via personal check or money order with their Expense Report or PCard documents.
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- If traveler does not submit payment, the employee and University will establish a payment plan where the amount owed is deducted from the employee’s paycheck.
- When the amount is deemed uncollectable, the University may seek legal remedies against employees who do not repay improper charges and reimbursements and/or record the amount due as taxable income to employee

**Air Transportation**

- Travelers will be reimbursed for coach seating only. If the total flight time (excluding layovers) from departure to arrival exceeds eight hours, traveler may, with pre-approval from their unit, upgrade to the next most economical travel over coach (business class in most cases).
  - Seat fees (e.g. preferred seating, aisle seat, or exit row) are reimbursable with a valid business reason as determined by approving authority (Department).
- Flight insurance is not reimbursable.
- Air travel paid for with federal sponsored funds must be consistent with the Fly America Act regulations. See the University’s [Fly America Act](http://policy.umn.edu/sites/policy.umn.edu/files/appendix/travel_appo.pdf) information.

**Frequent Flyer Miles (Accrual and Use of)**

- Frequent flyer miles or any other benefit issued by an airline must accrue to the benefit of the University when University funds are used to pay for airline travel pursuant to MN State Statute, 15.435, Section 20. University employees may not use these miles or other benefits for their personal travel.
- University employees are responsible for tracking miles earned with University funds, and providing records of such tracking upon request.
- When enough frequent flyer miles have been accumulated to earn free travel, employees are expected to use the miles for University travel.

**Ground Transportation**

- The least expensive method of ground transportation while traveling should be used (e.g., airport shuttles, taxis)
- Rental of automobiles should only be rented when absolutely necessary, or when doing so reduces overall transportation charges to the University.
- Rental vehicle and gas charges may be reimbursed, but not mileage.

**Use of Personal Vehicle & Claiming Mileage**

- Current University policy indicates that “A traveler may not use their personal vehicle for University business, unless they have obtained preapproval from their supervisor or manager. Even if approved, personal vehicles are NOT covered by University insurance. The traveler is responsible to insure a personal vehicle used for University business.”
- If personal automobile is used for travel in Minnesota, mileage or gas will be reimbursed, but not both.
- Policy states that “Business mileage is the travel an employee incurs beyond normal commute mileage (from home to the office and home again) on a normal workday. Employees may request reimbursement for any business mileage incurred.” See the Mileage Reimbursement Appendix for various mileage scenarios. [http://policy.umn.edu/sites/policy.umn.edu/files/appendix/travel_appo.pdf](http://policy.umn.edu/sites/policy.umn.edu/files/appendix/travel_appo.pdf)
- Map Quest or Google Maps (or equivalent) directions from point of departure to destination must be included with reimbursement.
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**Lodging**

- **Non-Conference – Domestic or International lodging:** May not exceed 150% of the lodging rate for that city, unless pre-approval has been obtained from authorized approver by completing the Request for Domestic Lodging Exception (UM 1636 – located in the Forms Library). If the traveler has not obtained prior approval, the overage from the reimbursement may be deducted.

- **Conference – Domestic or International lodging:** The lodging rate limit does not apply to conference travel, where the traveler is paying a pre-negotiated rate that is offered by the conference.

**Meals and Incidentals**

- **Travelers** should claim per diem provided for the city traveled to.
  - See the US General Services Administration (GSA) website to determine the city’s per diem rate [http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877](http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877)
  - See US Department of State website for international travel rates [https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp)

- **No receipts required UNLESS** a hospitality meal is paid for. Submit [hospitality form](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp) for hospitality meals.

- **Meals included with a conference will not be reimbursed and should be deducted from per diem amount.**

- **First and last days of travel will be reimbursed at 75% of the per diem rate.** This is a Central policy and no exceptions will be allowed.

- **Extended Day Travel is defined as travel lasting 12 hours, but not requiring an overnight stay.** Only dinner per diem can be reimbursed on an occasional basis.

- **Gratuities for** baggage carriers, bellhops and hotel maids are included in incidental portion of per diem and should not be submitted as separate expenses.

- **The standard practice is to provide per diem to travelers.** However, sometimes travel budgets may be limited and travelers may choose to be reimbursed for actual meal expenses instead of per diem. This is ok to do but if this option is chosen, then original itemized receipts must be turned in for all meals. The total expense of each day’s meals should not exceed the per diem amount. In addition, do not combine actual and meal per diem amounts for one business trip. It’s either per diem or actual...not a combination of both. A note in the justification section indicating traveler is choosing to be reimbursed for actual meal expenses is helpful for approvers and auditing purposes. (Note: The Department cannot mandate that the traveler be reimbursed for actual meal expenses. It is up to each traveler to make that determination.)

**University-wide Contract Vendors for Travel Reservations**

- **See** [https://travel.umn.edu/](https://travel.umn.edu/) click on reservations for a list of preferred vendors.
  - Make sure to use the Delta.com link on the Travel Services website to access the University’s negotiated fares. **DO NOT** go directly to Delta, since you will not be able to obtain the University’s discount.
Helpful Links

• Administrative Policy: Traveling on University Business
  http://policy.umn.edu/finance/travel

• Appendix to Policy: Travel Reimbursement Rates
  http://policy.umn.edu/finance/travel-appp

• Finance website
  http://hub.med.umn.edu/administrative-services/finance

• University of Minnesota’s Travel Website - https://travel.umn.edu/ (Note: This is a secured website and it will prompt you to log on to access it.)