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ORIGINAL ISSUE DATE: September 15, 1998	<u>SUB SECTION:</u> TRAVEL AND MEAL POLICY
REVISION DATE: April 3, 2018	

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SECTION I – GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Statement of Policy

It is the policy of the County of Humboldt (county) that any person in the services of the county who is required to travel in the performance of their duties shall be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses within certain limitations explained below i.e., budgetary restrictions. Reimbursable expenses include transportation, lodging, meals, and other necessary incidental charges which conform to the subsections, rates, and provisions herein. For all travel occasions, transportation, lodging, meals and other incidental charges are to be secured as economically as is reasonably possible.

B. Policy Authority

Authority for this policy originates with Chapter 4 TRAVEL EXPENSES, Section 254 et seq. of the Humboldt County Codes (Ordinances 1468, 1520, 1795, 1915), hereinafter referred to as HCC.

SECTION II – DEFINITIONS

- A. “Authorized County Activities” as used herein includes county business-related travel within and outside the County of Humboldt to conferences, meetings, presentations, seminars, workshops, training sessions, field visits and field trips. Discretion is given to department heads to resolve travel activities, as appropriate, before travel is authorized.
- B. “Budgeted Funds” means funds included in a department budget line item for travel, funds in a department budget that could be made available for travel or funds provided by an entity other than the county.
- C. “Business Travel” means an authorized work-related departure from one’s primary work location and continues until one returns. When travel is combined with an individual’s vacation; this policy does not apply to the time an individual is on vacation.
- D. “Primary Work Location” means the building or site at which the person in the service of the county normally performs the duties of his or her office or employment.
- E. “Person in the Services of the County” includes all employees including appointed and elected officers, heads of county departments and all non-salaried persons serving on boards, commissions, advisory agencies and committees who in their by-laws are governed by county Board of Supervisors. Specifically, members of boards, commissions, advisory agencies and committees must have stated in their by-laws that the county will reimburse their travel and meal costs. Contractors do not fall under this definition. Any travel reimbursement granted for contractors must be provided for in their contract and shall not rely on this policy as the legal basis of such reimbursement unless so stated in said contractual agreement.
- F. “Travel Expense” means costs incurred for travel to and from the primary work location, including transportation, meals, lodging and incidental expenses incurred in the

performance of duties required by law or the Board of Supervisors, or as authorized by the Board of Supervisors, or as determined as necessary by the department head or their designee authorizing the travel. In instances defined in Section VI – A.2.a. of this policy, travel expense may include costs incurred for the full length of travel to and from the meeting/event for which travel is necessary.

- G. “Travel Makers” are authorized department representatives who are responsible for making and securing travel arrangements as well as processing travel-related invoices for payment. The Purchasing Division maintains a list of department travel makers.
- H. “Statewide Travel Program (STP); State of California; Department of General Services (DGS)” The county participates in and encourages using the current STP for air travel, car rentals and hotel accommodations. The travel program has access to discount government rates; however the program excludes and does not support specific conference hotel block pricing.

SECTION III – TRAVEL APPROVAL

A. Business Travel Request form (BTR)

Departments shall develop or use the County Business Travel Request form (BTR) and policy for departmental travel approval. A fillable Business Travel Request is posted on the county intranet under Business Travel.

1. Business travel is authorized and reimbursable as provided herein with approval from the department head or designee (HCC 254-4) and is permitted as long as the department has sufficient budgeted funds for such travel. Department heads traveling out of county shall advise the County Administrative Officer (CAO), the Board of Supervisors and the responsible person in their department of their travel plans so that they may be contacted if necessary.
2. In the event of a financial crisis as declared by the Board of Supervisors business travel will require approval by the CAO. See (HCC 254-4) for exceptions.
3. If an outside entity pays for a portion or one hundred percent (100%) of travel a BTR is still required and shall be on file within the appropriate department as documentation.
4. A BTR shall be submitted to and approved by the appropriate department head or designee in advance of the departure date in order to review and secure travel discounts.
5. Upon approval, the BTR is forwarded to department’s travel maker unless the traveler specifically requests otherwise. When the BTR is forwarded to the travel maker, they will then make the necessary arrangements.
6. If an employee is aware of a discount rate that may not be available through the STP it is the employee’s responsibility to make the travel maker aware of the

discount rate. For example, conference hotel room rates are typically the best rate and should be used in lieu of an STP rate.

7. Travel by members of other Boards and Commissions of the county shall be first approved by the Board of Supervisors except as otherwise provided by ordinance or state law.¹

SECTION IV – MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

A. Mode of Transportation

The mode of transportation selected shall be consistent with economy and efficiency. Generally the least expensive mode of transportation should be used while keeping in mind the cost of staff time incurred in actual travel.

1. County employees are encouraged to carpool when more than one county employee is attending the same conference or function.
2. The county's liability for any claim for vehicle repair or restoration arising out of the use of a privately owned automobile with prior approval by the appropriate department head or designee is limited to the employee's insurance deductible or repair cost, not to exceed \$500.
3. County employees using a county vehicle shall not transport people who are not employed by the county except in the following circumstances:
 - a. The passenger(s) is employed by another government agency or is a contractor performing county-related business.
 - b. The passenger(s) is a client, patient, prisoner or is being provided transportation in situations not covered in this section and the policy has been approved by the county Risk Manager.
 - c. The department has adopted a travel policy providing transportation in situations not covered in this section and the policy has been approved by the county Risk Manager.

B. Air Travel

Air (economy class) or other means of transportation may be authorized by the department head or designee when in the best interests of the county. Each department's travel maker is responsible for making airline arrangements through the STP.

1. Chartered air transportation may not be used except upon prior approval from the appropriate department head (not designee).

¹ Pursuant to Assembly Bill 1234 (Chapter 700, Laws of 2005) Board of Supervisors' approved Boards and Commissions must adhere to the county's travel and meal policy. All claims for reimbursement are public record.

2. Personal aircraft may not be used except upon prior approval from the department head (not designee). Pilots must have a current pilot license and history and evidence of insurance on file with county Risk Management.
 - a. Personal aircraft use shall be reimbursed at the then-current Standard Mileage set by the Internal Revenue Service, based on the shortest air route from origin to destination.

C. Rental Cars

Individuals in the service of the county are encouraged to use airport shuttles, hotel courtesy vans or taxis rather than rental cars. However, when the expense of a rental car is less than these forms of transportation or when circumstances require using a rental car, such expenses may be reimbursed. Rental car reservations are the responsibility of the department's travel maker and shall be booked through the STP. Travel makers shall select the best value vehicle considering the purpose of the trip, number of people involved and rental vehicle availability.

1. Insurance

When renting a vehicle for county business, **do not** purchase insurance offered by the car rental agency.

2. Accident Notification

If a county employee is involved in an accident while operating a rental car, provide the following information to law enforcement agencies, the operator of the other vehicle(s), and the rental agency:

Insurance Company: Humboldt County, Self-Insured
Address: Human Resources, Risk Management Division
825 5th Street, Room 131
Eureka, CA 95501
707-268-3669

The employee must provide their driver's license number and work address. The employee also must complete the County of Humboldt Vehicle Accident Report Form RM04, posted on county intranet under Business Travel within 24 hours or as soon as possible. When completing the report, indicate the vehicle was rented and attach a copy of the rental agreement.

D. County Vehicles

County vehicles are available from Motor Pool and other locations for use on county business. Motor Pool has different vehicles to accommodate a variety of travel needs (e.g., economical cars for single-person travel; larger cars or vans for group travel; and four-wheel drive vehicles for back country travel). Reservations are required and should be made as far in advance as possible.

1. County vehicles may be routinely driven to and from work only if specifically authorized by the CAO.

E. Non-county or Private Vehicles

A private vehicle may be used for traveling on official county business with the prior approval of the department head or designee and certification of insurance coverage. No private vehicle may be used for county business without appropriate insurance coverage.

1. Persons in service to the county shall submit an Authorization to Use Privately Owned Vehicle Form prior to using a private vehicle for business travel. The Authorization to Use Privately Owned Vehicle Form is available on the county intranet under Business Travel. (HCC § 254-6 (c))

SECTION V – TRAVEL ADVANCES AND FUEL

A. Travel Advance

Travel advances are authorized for all county officers and employees to include the consideration of all authorized travel-related expenses. Advances are only given for 75 percent of the estimated travel cost. The final 25 percent of advances are subject to reconciliation of expenses upon return. All advances are to be made on forms and in accordance with procedures established by the Auditor-Controller (HCC § 254-12).

B. Fuel for Non-County or Private Vehicles

Fuel purchases for business travel are generally reimbursable under this policy. Such reimbursements are typically made for fuel purchases when renting a vehicle.

1. **Persons who receive a reimbursement payment for mileage driven shall not receive reimbursement for fuel purchases.**

Mileage reimbursement rates, set by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) are intended to include the cost of fuel. See Section VI - A for details on IRS reimbursement rates.

2. Persons who pay for fuel with county Cal Card shall not request or receive mileage reimbursement for those fuel purchases.
3. Persons in service to the county who receive a travel advance for the purchase of fuel shall include the advance amount if requesting additional reimbursement for fuel purchases.

C. Fuel for County Vehicles

A county cardlock fuel program credit card is available through the Motor Pool for the purpose of purchasing fuel for business travel. This program provides certain fuel tax

exemption for government agencies and it provides for road-side assistance should it be needed.

1. Persons in service to the county who check out a vehicle from Motor Pool shall use a fuel card for the purpose of purchasing fuel during business travel.
2. Fuel purchases shall not be reimbursable under this policy, except for abnormal circumstances. Written explanation shall be provided for these circumstances, and shall be approved by the department head and/or their designee.

SECTION VI – TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT AND MEALS

A. Non-county or Private Vehicles

Persons in service to the county using their own vehicles in the course of county business shall be reimbursed at the then-current Standard Mileage Rate set by the IRS. The IRS mileage rates can be accessed online at:

<https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

Mileage rates shall be posted on the county intranet under Business Travel. See Section V – C for specific details related to non-county or private vehicle fuel purchases.

1. Personal use mileage is not reimbursable.
 - a. Personal use mileage includes commuting from a person's residence to or from his or her primary work location or side trips during the course of business.

Example: Two county employees travel in a private vehicle to San Francisco for a two-day county-business-related meeting at an airport hotel. After the first day of the meeting, the employees go to a San Francisco Giants game and return to the hotel. After the second day of the meeting, the employees return to Humboldt County. Travel to and from San Francisco is reimbursable; travel to and from the baseball game is personal use mileage and is not reimbursable.
 - b. When a person in service to the county adds personal use mileage to a county-business-related trip that extends the duration of the trip, the county will only reimburse costs directly related to the portion of the trip that is county related.
2. In those cases where a person in the service of the county drives directly from his or her residence to the site of a meeting or another official purpose that is not that person's primary work location, mileage reimbursement is allowable for the actual miles driven less any personal miles and shall be for the shortest route. If a person drives past their primary work location the mileage shall begin from that location.

- a. In those cases where a person in the service of the county drives to the site of a meeting or other official purpose outside of their normal work hours, as determined by their department head and/or designee, then that person shall be reimbursed for the full length of their distance driven to and from the meeting/event. The individual's primary work location shall not be a factor in determining reimbursement in these instances.

Example: An employee lives in Garberville and normally works Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 5 pm at the County Courthouse. The employee drives their personal vehicle to the airport in McKinleyville on a Saturday to board a commercial airplane to attend a conference taking place in San Diego. Per Section VI-A.2.a. of this policy, that employee shall be reimbursed for their travel from their home in Garberville the full distance to the airport.

3. The county will not reimburse for the unlawful operation of a vehicle including parking, driving under the influence, and other moving or equipment violations of state or local laws.
4. The use of motorcycles, mopeds and similar types of vehicles for the conduct of county business is expressly prohibited with the exception of Sheriff's Department sworn personnel on duty in a specific assignment.
5. Non-county employees, who donate their time for a beneficial county purpose, can potentially be reimbursed for transportation costs pursuant to state guidelines and sufficient department funds. Department heads may approve such reimbursement requests.
6. When a department head or their designee authorizes use of a private vehicle for the convenience of the driver instead of more economical travel by air, reimbursement shall not exceed the cost of usual airfare.

B. County Vehicles

There is no mileage reimbursement for using county vehicles.

1. Motor Pool will charge vehicle-related expenses to the department for the time in which a county vehicle was in use.
2. The county will not reimburse for the unlawful operation of a county vehicle including parking or moving violations except when it involves an equipment violation of state or local laws.

C. Air Travel

1. Air transportation arrangements are made through a department's travel maker.
 - a. Upon receipt of the department approved BTR, the department's travel maker will arrange air transportation through the STP.

- b. In some cases the person in service to the county may wish to purchase the airline ticket directly and be reimbursed through normal claiming procedures. Travel agency surcharges on tickets are reimbursable.
- c. Travel in business class. First class or any category on any flight above the coach/economy level is allowable if (1) the traveler pays the cost difference or (2) the department can document that no other option exists and the selected flight is the only option for travel.
- d. Departments should schedule air transportation sufficiently in advance of travel to take advantage of discount rates. In all cases airline tickets shall be purchased using procedures that result in the lowest net county cost.

Note that some tickets are not refundable or have other travel restrictions. In some situations where travel is anticipated but not certain, it may be advantageous to pay a few dollars more for a ticket that can be returned for a refund than lose the funds of an entire ticket that is not used. STP program allows the exchange of airline ticket funds within one calendar year of the unused ticket date, exclusive to the original traveler.

D. Lodging

- 1. Lodging arrangements are preferred to be made through a department's travel maker by using the STP program whenever possible.

In some cases the person in service to the county may wish to book lodging arrangements outside of the STP program. The following applies in those cases:

- a. A commercial lodging receipt from the days of travel indicated is required to support reimbursement or Cal Card charge. Internet receipts are acceptable as long as the receipt states the length of stay, confirmation number, rate, and a zero balance, as proof that the bill was paid.
- b. Only the single occupancy rate may be claimed for reimbursement except multiple occupancy rate may be claimed when county employees share, when appropriate, a room.
- c. Travel makers and employees shall seek the lowest cost accommodations reasonably available. If lodging is in connection with a conference, the rate may not exceed the maximum group rates published for the conference.

For non-conference related lodging "government rates" are provided by the STP and should be requested when reserving outside of the program.

E. Meals

1. Meals and tips shall be reimbursed to all county officers and employees, including the Board of Supervisors. No documentation of actual costs is required ² when requesting the current posted per diem rates.
2. Meal expenses for persons in service to the county in the course of county business shall be reimbursed at the then-current GSA posted rate. The GSA rates are dependent on the primary destination of travel and specific guidelines. Rates are posted online at:
<https://gsa.gov/perdiem>

The per diem rate link shall be posted on the county intranet under Business Travel.
 - a. Cities not specifically listed shall be reimbursed at the then-current GSA posted rate for the destination county. The meals and incidental rates include taxes and tips so travelers will not be reimbursed separately for those items.
 - b. Federal Travel Regulations allows for the actual expense reimbursement when per diem rates are insufficient to meet necessary expenses. Expenses that go over the current posted per diem rate will require receipts and reimbursement approval by the department head or designee.
3. For the purpose of determining entitlement for meal reimbursements the following will apply:
 - a. Times for travel must be included on reimbursement claims.
 - b. Breakfast – can be claimed if travel began no later than 7 a.m. and lasted at least four hours.
 - c. Lunch – can be claimed if travel began no later than 11 a.m. and lasted at least four hours.
 - d. Dinner – can be claimed if travel lasted to or after 7 p.m.
4. Expenses for alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.
5. Meals that are paid for by the government such as through a conference registration fee are not reimbursable.
6. Continental breakfast is not considered a meal. Travelers can claim breakfast expenses if a hotel provides only a continental breakfast.

² Pursuant to Assembly Bill 1234 (Chapter 700, Laws of 2005), Board of Supervisors' approved Boards and Commissions can receive reimbursement for incurred expenses. Receipts must be submitted for all expenses incurred by a member of a Board or Commission.

7. Tips in excess of 20 percent of the cost of the meal will not be reimbursed. Tips made at fast food restaurants and/or convenience stores will not be reimbursed even if the meal cost is less than the maximum reimbursement rate.

F. Meals/Food Costs Associated with Local/Group Meetings

1. In-county meal expense may be allowed for breakfast, lunch or dinner with approval of department head or designee.

The following circumstances are allowable expenses under this policy:

- a. Reasonable food costs associated with meetings involving members of the general public, private sector business persons, other public agencies, or officials representing other counties, city, state, or federal agencies (i.e. non-county employees), who donate their time for a beneficial county purpose.
- b. Meetings with commissions, task forces, and ad hoc committees which include Humboldt County business as an agenda item.
- c. When a county elected official meets with constituents, stakeholders, or other individuals or groups to discuss county business or community issues.
- d. Training sessions with commissions, task forces and ad hoc committees whereby it is necessary or appropriate for the employee to remain on site during the meal period.
- e. Training sessions with various programmatic groups with established budget units, where food costs are authorized by the program and it is necessary or appropriate for employee(s) to remain on site during the meal period.
- f. Food costs for departmental staff meetings either within or outside normal working hours.
- g. Business meals occurring outside normal business hours may be allowed. The purpose or goal of each business-related meal must be stated on the reimbursement form, with approval of department head or designee. Reimbursement cannot exceed the maximum amount allowable under this policy unless receipts are submitted.

Responsibility for prior authorization shall be with the individual department head or their designee. Authority for payment under subsections a, b, c, d and e, shall require a meeting sign-in sheet and original approval signatures of the department head or their designee.

G. Incidental Expenses

The Federal Travel Regulation Chapter 300, Part 300-3, under Per Diem Allowance, describes incidental expenses as: fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff and staff on ships. These expenses are considered allowable under this county travel and meal policy.

1. The following expenses may be claimed if necessarily incurred in performance of official county business. These expenses require receipts for reimbursement. (HCC 254-7)
 - a. Commuter ground transportation.
 - b. Professional laundry service for necessary travel extending beyond five days.
 - c. Emergency service and repairs to county vehicles. Check with the Public Works Department, Motor Pool Division for current procedures for such repairs.
 - d. Long distance telephone, email (Wi-Fi) and fax charges for county business.
2. The following expenses may be claimed if necessarily incurred in performance of official county business. These expenses require receipts when available.
 - a. Parking fees.
 - b. Ferry, bridge and road tolls.
 - c. Ridesharing and taxis - may include a tip of no more than 15 percent of receipt.
 - d. Other incidental expenses as approved by the department head or designee.
3. These items are not reimbursable:
 - a. Alcoholic beverages.
 - b. In-room movies.
 - c. Family expenses when family members accompany county staff, department heads or Board members on official county business.

H. Event Registration

1. Registration, event fees, and meal expenses when the meals are part of an event, shall be reimbursed as approved by the department head or designee.
2. Reimbursement for meals is not generally reimbursable when meals are included as part of the event. Meals may be reimbursable under the following conditions:
 - a. The employee arrives late and misses the meal;
 - b. The employee becomes ill and misses the meal;
 - c. The employee needs to leave the event for work-related reasons and misses the meal; or
 - d. For dietary purposes, the meal provided is not suitable.

I. Travel Claim Procedure

This policy provides travelers with several opportunities to pay for travel-related expenses using county programs. Special care shall be taken when submitting claims for reimbursement for travel expenses to ensure that replication of payment is not made.

1. Claims shall be made on forms approved or issued by the Auditor-Controller (see Auditor-Controller intranet forms page). All claims shall have original receipts except as provided herein.
 - a. If required receipts are not available or are lost, a statement of the officer or employee who incurred the expense shall be acceptable proof of the expenditures set forth in the statement when approved by the department head or designee.
 - b. Reasonable effort must be made to acquire a copy of your receipt.
2. Failure to complete the forms as required or to submit original receipts may be grounds for denying reimbursement.
3. Travel claims shall be submitted within thirty (30) days of incurring the expense unless an exception is made by the department head or designee and Auditor-Controller.

Travel claims originating in June are due to the Auditor-Controller no later than 14 days after June 30th. Employees are encouraged to review their internal department's deadlines for processing claims at the end of a fiscal year.

4. All claim forms and associated documents related to reimbursable county expenditures are considered public records and are subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act (Chapter 3.5 commencing with Section 6250 of Division 7 Title 1).

