

**Board of County Commissioners
Okaloosa County, Florida**

Title: Official Travel: Authorization and Reimbursement
Date Adopted: ~~October 3, 2017~~ January 16, 2024
Effective Date: ~~November 1, 2017~~ March 1, 2024

SECTION I: ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Florida Statutes Sections: 112.061, 125.0104 (9), and 331.20
Florida Administrative Code, Chap 69I-42
Attorney General Opinions: 81-53, and 83-37
Okaloosa County Resolutions 03-143, 06-07, 24-__

SECTION II: OBJECTIVE

To establish policy where authorized travel is necessary and reimbursement is requested for County officials, employees and other authorized persons.

SECTION III: DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the following terms shall have the meanings set forth below:

Appointed Official - The County Administrator or appointed advisory board member.

Approval Authority – Person or persons within the County who are authorized to approve travel and/or reimbursement of travel expenses. Depending on circumstances or type of travel, this would be the Department Director, Deputy County Administrator, County Administrator, Vice Chairman of the Board or Chairman of the Board.

Authorized Person(s) – A person, other than a County official or employee, who is authorized to incur travel expenses for official business, including but not limited to a consultant, a volunteer, or a candidate for an executive or director position.

Board – Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners.

Elected Officials - County Commissioners.

Employee - All employees of the County.

Local Mileage – Actual mileage incurred within Okaloosa County or the surrounding counties in which the traveler is not away from his or her official headquarters overnight and may be classified as “map” or “vicinity”, depending on if the starting location and destination are listed on the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) website: <http://fdotewp1.dot.state.fl.us/CityToCityMileage/viewer.aspx>. If both locations are listed, it would be claimed under “map” mileage. If not listed, it would be claimed under “vicinity” mileage.

Map Mileage - Mileage computed on the basis of the current official map of the FDOT, Official Travel

Mileage Chart located on the FDOT website. This is from city limit to city limit.

Example: Crestview to Fort Walton Beach: FDOT map mileage = 28 miles. Both the city of Crestview and Fort Walton Beach are listed on the FDOT mileage website.

Official Headquarters – For an appointed official, employee or authorized person, their pre- assigned, primary work location. For elected officials, in accordance with Attorney General Opinion 83-37, the official headquarters is the County seat, located in Crestview.

Pre-Approval Travel Request form - This form shall be completed for each person requesting approval for overnight out-of-county travel.

Vicinity Mileage - Actual mileage incurred within the city, town or county of the traveler's headquarters or destination, or other necessary mileage incurred which cannot be calculated as map mileage. For city pairs not included in the FDOT chart, use an on-line mapping tool, such as Google Maps or MapQuest showing the shortest route.

Example: Crestview to Milligan. Crestview is listed on the FDOT website, but Milligan is not. Therefore, using MapQuest, the mileage would be listed as vicinity mileage and annotated in the vicinity mileage column on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form to the nearest tenth of a mile. Example: 5.6.

If the actual mileage is more than the map mileage, the additional miles may be claimed as vicinity miles.

Example: County Extension Office in Crestview to the Emerald Coast Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach. Map mileage is 28 miles (Crestview to Fort Walton Beach). The actual mileage is 32.1 miles, according to MapQuest. 28 miles would be listed in the map mileage column on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses and 4.1 miles would be listed in the vicinity mileage column.

Voucher For Traveling Expenses form - This form must be accurately completed with all necessary supporting documentation before traveling expenses are reimbursed.

SECTION IV: SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

Travel expenses shall be limited to those expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of a public purpose.

This policy applies to travel for which reimbursement will be claimed by County officials, employees or authorized persons as follows:

- A. All travel must be in the conduct of official County business or to attend meetings, conferences, conventions, and training sessions for the benefit of the County, at County expense, and/or pursuant to proper authorization prescribed herein.
- B. All travel must be authorized and pre-approved. Travel requests must be accompanied by a signed statement by the traveler's supervisor stating that such travel is on official business and stating the public purpose of such travel. This is accomplished on the Pre-Approval Travel Request and/or the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form.
- C. All travel must be by a usually traveled route. In case a person travels by an indirect route for

his/her own convenience (e.g. combine County business with personal travel), any extra costs shall be borne by the traveler; and reimbursement for expenses shall be based only on such charges as would have been incurred by a usually traveled route.

- i. To determine and disclose any extra costs that may be incurred, two transportation costs must be included with the Pre-Approval Travel Request: (1) the cost of airfare or rental car as requested by the traveler and (2) the cost of airfare or rental car by usually traveled route.

SECTION V: EXCEPTIONS

Any exceptions or unusual circumstances not provided for in this policy must be documented and will be subject to review and validation by the appropriate approval authority.

SECTION VI: TYPES OF TRAVEL

- A. Class "A" Travel: continuous travel for a period of 24 hours or more that involves overnight absences out of the County.
- B. Class "B" Travel: continuous travel of less than 24 hours that involves overnight absences out of the County.
- C. Class "C" Travel: travel for short or day trips where the traveler is not away from his or her official headquarters overnight.

SECTION VII: TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

- A. The following guidelines should be used when approving requests for travel:
 - i. Funds are available in the budget.
 - ii. A determination is made that a legitimate public purpose is achieved in taking the trip.
 - iii. The number of persons traveling is the minimum number required to accomplish the purpose of the trip.
 - iv. The method of travel (e.g., air, vehicle) is specified and the routing and other arrangements are the most economical available and result in the shortest time away or the lowest overall cost consistent with the distance to be traveled and the purpose of the trip. Any circumstances that require a deviation from this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate approval authority.
- B. Overnight Out-of-County travel by employees must be approved in advance by the County Administrator using the Pre-Approval Travel Request form.
- C. Overnight Out-of-County travel by the County Administrator and Board members shall be approved by the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners.
- D. Overnight Out-of-County travel by the Chairman of the Board shall be approved by the Vice Chairman of the Board.

- E. Department Directors can approve Class C travel for their employees
 - i. Travel up to \$200.00 per month may be approved by the Department Director or designee.
 - ii. Travel over \$200.00 per month must be approved by the Department Director and County Administrator or their designee.
- F. International travel by ALL travelers on behalf of the County shall be approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

SECTION VIII: TRAVEL ADVANCES

Travel advances of up to 80% of the estimated travel expense may be requested on the Pre- Approval Travel Request form, but are not mandatory. Travel advances will be made only for amounts of \$50.00 or more.

SECTION IX: ALLOWABLE TRAVEL EXPENSES

- A. Meals - allowances are established by Board resolution
 - i. Domestic meal per diems shall be based on the destination and shall be pursuant to U.S. General Services Administration: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>
 - ii. International meal per diems shall be based on the destination and shall be pursuant to U.S. Department of State: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp
https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=114&menu_id=75
 - iii. Travelers may receive a meal allowance for continuous travel of 24 hours or more, which involves overnight absence outside the city or town of the official headquarters or immediate vicinity. Meal allowances for short or day trips not resulting in overnight absence, Class C travel, are not reimbursable. A traveler may receive meal allowances for Class A or B travel as provided in this section, which shall be based on the following schedule:
 - Breakfast—When travel begins before 6 a.m. and extends beyond 8 a.m.
 - Lunch—When travel begins before 12 noon and extends beyond 2 p.m.
 - Dinner—When travel begins before 6 p.m. and extends beyond 8 p.m.
 - iv. Hour of departure and return must be annotated on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form when claiming meals.
 - v. A printout of the applicable meal rate table based on the destination must be submitted with the Pre-Approval Travel Request.
 - vi. Under no circumstances may an employee be reimbursed for any meal or lodging included in a convention or conference registration fee paid by the County. A continental breakfast provided as part of the conference/convention registration fee or provided by the lodging

establishment is considered breakfast and **may not** be claimed for reimbursement. An evening reception or other function that serves only hors d'oeuvres is not considered dinner and dinner **may be** claimed for reimbursement.

- vii. When a meal is provided by an airline, other common carrier, or as a part of a program/event, the traveler is not allowed to claim the meal for reimbursement.
- viii. Purchasing Cards **may not be used** for meals, except as specifically authorized for certain promotional activities

B. Lodging

- i. Lodging expenses may be charged on the County Purchasing Card only after travel is pre-approved.
- ii. The traveler must also provide the lodging establishment with a copy of the County's tax-exempt certificate. **No sales tax will be reimbursed for Florida accommodations that would otherwise qualify for a tax exemption.**
- iii. A traveler may not claim reimbursement for lodging for overnight travel within 50 miles of his headquarters or residence, unless the circumstances necessitating such overnight travel are fully explained by the traveler and approved by the Approval Authority. Criteria for approval shall include late night or early morning job responsibilities and excessive travel time because of traffic conditions.
- iv. International lodging per diems shall be based on the destination and shall be pursuant to the federal publication "Standardized Regulations (Government Civilians, Foreign Areas)", U.S. Department of State: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp

C. Transportation

- i. Air - Coach fare, by the route and/or rate best suited for the interest of the County, is allowed and must be documented by a paid receipt. Should a traveler select a different route and/or rate, for their own benefit, reimbursement will be limited to the Coach fare, by the route and/or rate, determined by what is in the best interest of the County. Reimbursement of first class airfare is specifically limited to trips under emergency conditions when coach accommodations are not available. In those instances where an electronic airline ticket was purchased, documentation should include a copy of the traveler's itinerary, identifying the purchase of the airline ticket, or a separate paid receipt for the airline ticket. Airfare can be purchased using the County Purchasing Card only after receiving prior approval.
- ii. County-Owned Vehicles - When available, County-owned vehicles may be used for travel. Fuel cards provided with each County vehicle will be used for fuel purchases. Receipts must be maintained and turned in to Fleet Operations upon completion of travel.
- iii. Private Vehicle - Use of a privately owned vehicle for travel is authorized when approved on the Pre-Approval Travel Request form. A traveler using his/her privately owned vehicle shall be reimbursed at the IRS optional standard mileage rate for business travel in effect on the date(s) of travel. All mileage shall be shown from point of origin to point of destination, and

included on the travel request form. When possible, mileage should be computed and reimbursed based on the current map of the FDOT for in-state travel. Alternate methods of computing mileage, such as the use of MapQuest or Google Maps, may be used to claim out-of-state or vicinity mileage. Vicinity mileage necessary for the conduct of official business is allowable but must be listed on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form in the vicinity mileage column and the purpose explained.

- iv. Taxi, Ride-Share (Uber, Lyft, etc.), Public Transportation, Parking, and Car Rental - The actual costs incurred for normal use of taxi, Ride-Share, public transportation, and parking are reimbursable. Receipts are required for reimbursement of parking, taxi, Ride-Share and public transportation costs. In those cases where receipts are not available (i.e., mass transit tokens) reimbursement may still be claimed with an explanation of the circumstances via a memorandum attached to the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form. Car rental expense may be charged to the County purchasing card or is reimbursable, but only when prior approval is obtained on the Pre-Approval Travel Request form. A County approved traveler **must** purchase from the rental car company, optional damage insurance coverage, often referred to as a Loss Damage Waiver, to cover costs for accidental damage or theft of the rental vehicle. The purchase of "Personal Accident Insurance" by a traveler is non-reimbursable as employees on authorized business are covered under Worker's Compensation.

D. Registration Fees

- i. Fees for registration, including meals and other programmed events sponsored by the conference or convention organization, should be prepaid wherever possible.
- ii. Optional fees for recreation and/or entertainment activities not covered in the registration fee associated with a conference or convention are not reimbursable, such as a golf tournament, concert, etc.
- iii. Fees for non-authorized persons (e.g., family members) to participate in activities are not reimbursable.

E. Miscellaneous

- i. Reasonable tips and gratuities may be reimbursed for actual tips paid as follows:
 - Taxi or Ride Share drivers - not to exceed 15% of the fare.
 - Mandatory valet parking - not to exceed \$3 per occasion.
 - Portage of baggage - not to exceed \$1 per bag, and not to exceed \$5 total per incident. The number of bags must be included on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form.
 - Hotel maid service - not to exceed \$1 per night.
- ii. Tips for meals are **not** reimbursable.
- iii. Road and bridge tolls may be claimed upon presentation of receipts. Travelers using a SunPass with their private vehicle shall print out a receipt from the website showing the date,

time and location of the charge for reimbursement.

SECTION X: REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

- A. All overnight travel must be submitted to the Finance Department within 20 business days of travel completion.
- B. Travel requests submitted for approval and reimbursement must be accompanied by the following items. Confirmations and itineraries are sufficient for advances. However, actual receipts, tickets, and invoices notating dates and times are required for settlement.
 - i. Completed Voucher for Traveling Expenses form.
 - ii. U.S. General Services Administration Meals & Incidentals (M&IE) Rates printout (domestic travel).
 - iii. U.S. Department of State Office of Allowances Foreign Per Diem Rates and Allocation of M&IE Rates printouts (international travel).
 - iv. Registration forms.
 - v. Conference/class agenda (In cases where agendas are not provided, a memo, email correspondence or letter from the meeting sponsor or business showing the meeting purpose, dates, times, and locations must be provided).
 - vi. Itemized hotel receipt.
 - vii. Flight itinerary and boarding passes.
 - viii. Car rental receipt with departure and return dates.
 - ix. Invoices or itemized receipts for any other incidental travel costs (taxi fare, parking fees, tolls, fuel, etc.).
- C. The Voucher for Traveling Expenses form should reflect the entire cost of the trip, including all advances and direct payments made. The traveler must sign and date the form for completeness and correctness as to the actual travel performed. It must then be signed by the traveler's supervisor and appropriate Department Director before sending to Finance for payment. NOTE: If the total amount of travel is greater than \$100.00 of the pre-approval amount, an explanation needs to be annotated on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form in the "additional justification/notes" section and all other supporting documentation must be attached. It must then be forwarded to the Approval Authority for approval prior to Finance for payment.
- D. If a receipt is not available, a memorandum of the expense explanation must be annotated on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form.
- E. Travel reimbursement rates may differ when travel is funded pursuant to grant agreements, therefore, any amount above the grant agreement may be funded from the traveler's department. The specific grant agreement should be reviewed prior to travel.

SECTION XI: LOCAL, VICINITY or CLASS C REIMBURSEMENT

- A. County employees shall be entitled to reimbursement for the use of their private vehicles and for expenses which they may incur while performing travel in conduct of county business.
- B. Reimbursement for local, vicinity or Class "C" travel shall be submitted on the Voucher for Traveling Expenses form and shall specify:
 - i. the date of the travel,
 - ii. the origin,
 - iii. the destination,
 - iv. the purpose of the travel,
 - v. the number of map/vicinity miles traveled,
 - vi. other expenses, such as tolls, parking, etc., and
 - vii. the amount requested for reimbursement.
- C. If the expenses being requested for reimbursement pertain to use of a privately owned vehicle, the mileage reimbursement amount is calculated by multiplying the number of miles traveled by the most current IRS optional standard mileage rate for business travel. Receipts for expenses for tolls, parking, etc. must be attached.
- D. If the expenses being requested for reimbursement pertain to use of a County vehicle, receipts for actual expenses for parking, tolls, etc. must be attached.
- E. The Voucher for Traveling Expenses form will be submitted monthly, within 20 business days following the end of that calendar month. It must be signed by the employee requesting the reimbursement, employees' supervisor and the appropriate department director. If the traveler is the Department Director, the voucher must be forwarded to the traveler's approving authority (Deputy County Administrator or County Administrator).
- F. The Approval Authority may grant monthly allowances in fixed amounts for use of privately owned automobiles on official business in lieu of the mileage rate. Allowances granted pursuant to this paragraph shall be reasonable, taking into account the customary use of the automobile, the roads customarily traveled, and whether any of the expenses incident to the operation, maintenance, and ownership of the automobile are paid from funds of the County or other public funds. Such allowance may be changed at any time, and shall be made on the basis of a signed statement of the traveler, filed before the allowance is granted or changed, and at least annually thereafter. The statement shall show the places and distances for an average typical month's travel on official business, and the amount that would be allowed under the approved rate per mile for the travel shown in the statement.
- G. If the voucher totals more than \$200.00, it must be forwarded to the Approval Authority for

approval prior to being sent to Finance for processing and payment.

- H. At the end of each fiscal year, September's voucher must be submitted to Finance prior to the cutoff date in October established by Finance.

SECTION XII: CANCELLED TRAVEL

It shall be the responsibility of the traveler to notify their Approval Authority should travel be cancelled for any reason. At that time, the traveler shall have the responsibility of making a good faith effort to recover all fees paid and cancel all fees incurred but not yet paid. A good faith effort shall include but not be limited to documented telephone calls and written correspondence.

A traveler shall incur no liability for fees paid or incurred when travel is cancelled due to an emergency or through no fault of the traveler. However, if the traveler cancels the travel for any other reason they shall be responsible for all costs that cannot be recovered or cancelled.

SECTION XIII: AIRPORT PROMOTIONAL TRAVEL AND PROMOTIONAL EXPENSES

The Airport Department is authorized and approved to make expenditures of airport revenues to publicize, advertise, and promote the activities of the County's airports; to make known the advantages, facilities, resources, products, attractions, and attributes of the County's airports; to create a favorable climate of opinion concerning the County's airports; to cooperate with other agencies, public and private, to accomplish these purposes; and, in furtherance thereof, to authorize expenditures for the purposes here enumerated, including meals, hospitality, and entertainment of persons in the interest of promoting and engendering goodwill toward its airports (other than direct subsidy of air carrier operations which is prohibited) provided they are in accordance with section 331.20, Florida Statutes. All travel, meals, hospitality, and entertainment of person's expenses shall be pre-approved by the County Administrator and must not exceed \$10,000 for any occurrence without the approval of the Board.

SECTION XIV: TOURIST DEVELOPMENT PROMOTIONAL TRAVEL AND/OR ENTERTAINMENT-RELATED EXPENSES

This policy, as well as the provisions of Section 125.0104(9), Florida Statutes, when applicable, and the Tourist Development Department Operations & Procedures Manual govern reimbursement for travel and entertainment-related expenses.