



Cook County Travel and Business Expenses Policy and Procedures

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Cook County Travel and Business Expenses Policy and Procedures

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INTRODUCTION

The County of Cook (“County”) has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure County resources are used responsibly and that individuals do not incur inappropriate or excessive expenses, or gain financially from the County. As such, all persons who travel on behalf of the County are fiscally responsible and accountable for all County expenditures.

The purpose of the County’s travel and business expense policy and procedures is to provide guidelines for payment of authorized travel expenses in an efficient, cost effective manner, and to enable County travelers to successfully execute their local and non-local travel requirements at the lowest reasonable costs, resulting in the best value for the County.

All official travel should be prudently planned so that the County’s best interests are served at the most reasonable cost. Anyone traveling on County business is expected to exercise the same economy that a practical person would exercise when traveling on personal business.

Excessive costs or unjustifiable costs are not acceptable and will not be reimbursed. The individual requesting reimbursement is responsible for insuring that his/her expense and related reimbursement request complies with all applicable policies, is properly authorized, and is supported with necessary receipts and documentation.

Supervisors and department heads are accountable for use of County funds and must verify that all travel is budgeted and expenditures are charged to the proper account(s).

These guidelines and procedures described in this policy may not cover every possible situation. Travelers should contact supervisors and/or department heads for clarification as needed.

APPLICABILITY

The Cook County Travel and Business Expense Policy and Procedures, and all associated requirements, applies to all County employees and all County officials, whether elected or appointed, who incur travel or business expenses while conducting official business on behalf of the County.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS

The County reimburses authorized travelers for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in connection with approved travel on its behalf.

A necessary expense is one for which there exists a clear business purpose and is within the County’s expense policy limitations. A clear business purpose contains all information necessary to substantiate the expenditure including a list of attendees, if appropriate, and their

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purpose for attending, business topics discussed, or how the expenditure benefited the County.

Each county bureau and department is charged with the responsibility for determining the necessity, available resources and justification for the need and the method of travel.

All employees and supervisory staff should keep the following key points in mind when planning and/or approving travel on behalf of the County:

- i. All official travel should be planned so that the best interests of the County are served at the most reasonable cost;
- ii. All official travel shall be by the most economical mode of transportation available considering travel time, cost and work requirements;
- iii. Most travel must be authorized in advance by the traveler's department head;
- iv. Each department head is responsible for ensuring that all travel on behalf of the County complies with all applicable travel regulations;
- v. Employees must be authorized to commit the County's resources, and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including the termination of employment if proper authorization is not obtained;
- vi. All travel authorizations must be documented by the process established within each bureau or department as to how prior authorization for travel will be documented, e.g., travel request form, email;
- vii. Under no circumstances should an individual approve his/her own expense report.
- viii. Travel related costs shall not be reimbursed from petty cash funds; and
- ix. The County will not reimburse personal expenses.

LOCAL TRAVEL

Definitions

"Local travel" means travel that is performed for official purposes in and around the employee's primary work location and does not entitle the traveler to lodging, meals or other travel related allowances.

"Primary work location" means the worksite to which the employee is assigned and reports to when not performing local travel.

Authorized Modes of Transportation for Local Travel

Authorized modes of local transportation for conducting local official County business in preferred order are:

- i. Public transportation, i.e., CTA, Pace, Metra
- ii. County-owned vehicles, i.e., Shared Fleet or ZipCar;
- iii. Taxicabs and ride sharing services; and
- iv. Personally owned vehicle.

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Local Travel Requirements

Preferred Method of Travel

Public transportation is the preferred method of local travel. However, it is recognized that there are times when this mode of transportation may not be feasible due to location, timing, equipment/materials, and/or security reasons. In such cases, the use of a County-owned or personally owned vehicle (“POV”) for local travel may be approved by a department head. Use of a POV for local travel may not be approved solely to accommodate the traveler’s personal comfort or convenience.

County-owned vehicles

The following requirements apply to local travel by means of a County-owned vehicle:

- i. The department head has determined public transportation is not feasible or practical.
- ii. County owned vehicles are to be used only for County business. The use of County-owned vehicles for personal use is prohibited.
- iii. Employees must follow the Vehicle Policy Ordinance, and any other rules, regulations or other applicable requirements adopted by the Cook County Board of Commissioners or the Vehicle Steering Committee.

Personally Owned Vehicles

The following requirements apply to the use of a POV for local travel:

- i. County employees, with the prior written permission of their department head, may use their POV to conduct official County business. Department heads shall only approve the use of POV for County business when it is in the best interest of the County to do so.
- ii. POV use is in the County’s best interest when it is the least expensive option or the employee’s department head determines in writing that a less expensive mode of transportation is clearly not feasible or practical.
- iii. Each bureau (or equivalent operating unit) is responsible for developing a process for approving and documenting the use of a POV for official travel.

A copy of the department head’s written approval for each instance of POV use must accompany each request for POV mileage reimbursement and related expenses.

Reimbursement for Local Travel by Public Transportation

Mass Transit and Metra

Local official travel via mass transit, e.g., CTA, PACE, Metra, may be reimbursed as a transportation expense. A receipt is required for reimbursement.

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Taxicabs

Employees may utilize a taxicab if advantageous to the County and necessary for urgent business. Reimbursement is limited to the metered fare. Tipping is at the traveler's expense and not reimbursable. A receipt is required for reimbursement.

Uber/Lyft, etc.

Employees may utilize Uber or a similar service if advantageous to the County and necessary for urgent business. In such cases, an employee may only use the service's lowest-cost option, e.g., Uber X. Reimbursement for Uber and similar ride services is limited to the actual cost of the trip. A receipt is required for reimbursement.

Reimbursement for Local Travel by POV

Reimbursement for POV mileage shall be subject to the following terms and conditions:

- i. An employee shall not be reimbursed for commuting mileage, i.e., the distance between the employee's residence and the employee's primary work location.
- ii. When approved local travel starts and terminates at the employee's primary work location, only the most direct route mileage (using the TEVS mileage calculator) from the primary work location to the site(s) visited and back to the primary work location will be reimbursed. In the event the employee's work day ends at a site, the mileage from the last site to residence shall not be reimbursed.
- iii. An employee driving a POV may start and terminate the field assignment at her/his home or official workstation, at the discretion of the department head, provided that where the assignment starts and/or terminates at the employee's home, mileage from residence to first location and last location to residence is deemed commuting mileage and shall not be reimbursed.
- iv. The number of County business miles driven per month will be compensated at the standard IRS deduction rate for business related transportation currently in effect and authorized by the Bureau of Administration. IRS mileage rates adjusted midyear will not be made retroactive. The IRS per-mile rate covers the total cost of operating a POV for local travel or transportation away from home, including such items as gasoline, oil, maintenance, repairs, etc.
- v. Any travel voucher for POV reimbursement that does not include a copy of the prior authorization for POV travel shall not be processed for payment.

Parking and Tolls

Employees can be reimbursed for parking and toll expenses when using a County owned vehicle or POV for County business. Parking and tolls shall be allowed for reimbursement if items are

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supported by receipts.

Local Travel Reimbursement

Local travel expenses are reimbursed by means of a Travel Expense Voucher (TEV) on the Transportation Expense Voucher System (TEVS). A sample TEV is attached at Appendix 1.

All requests for local travel reimbursement must be generated from the TEVS. The Comptroller's Office will not accept handwritten vouchers.

Employees are required to utilize the TEVS for all mileage reimbursement and other transportation expenses associated with local travel including tolls and parking. TEVS automatically calculates the distance for the most direct route between the two points of travel.

All TEV expenses for parking, tolls, taxi, and public transportation costs shall be supported by receipts for all items, individually.

TEVs prepared through the TEVS must be prepared and signed by the employee who has incurred the expense and signed by his/her department head (or a designated representative). The original local travel voucher shall be submitted to the Comptroller's Office and a copy should be retained by the employee and by the department. Falsification of a TEV is considered a major cause infraction subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

The traveler submitting the TEV is personally responsible for its accuracy and propriety. Local travel trip details are to be entered immediately following travel to eliminate possibility of errors. The TEV must be completed in its entirety.

Approval and Submission of Local Transportation Expense Voucher

In order to be eligible for local travel reimbursement, the employee must submit the TEV by no later than the 20th day of the month following the month in which the travel expense was incurred, unless the failure to submit a voucher within the 20 day period is due to extraordinary circumstances.

The local transportation expense voucher shall then be reviewed and approved by the traveler's department head (or a designated representative), or bureau chief (or equivalent) in the case of a department head, whose signature will represent his or her representation that he or she has reviewed the voucher and that the information contained on the voucher is complete and accurate.

Upon approving a TEV, a supervisor and department head (or a designated representative) are certifying:

- i. Appropriateness of the expenditure and reasonableness of the amount;
- ii. Availability of funds;
- iii. Compliance with applicable reimbursement policies; and

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iv. Completeness and accuracy of documentation.

A department must submit the TEV to the Comptroller's Office via TEVS by no later than the 60th day after the end of the month in which the travel expense was incurred. An employee who submits a voucher within the 20-day submission period will not be denied reimbursement for failure of his/her department to timely submit the voucher to the Comptroller's office. A copy of the TEV shall be retained by the department.

Any TEV not prepared in accordance with these regulations, including the proper signatures, will be returned to the originator for corrections.

A request for reimbursement of an expense that does not comply with these guidelines may be denied and treated as a personal expense to the traveler and shall be deducted from the reimbursement due the traveler.

NON-LOCAL TRAVEL

The following is not intended to cover routine local travel related to the performance of regular job duties and applies only to official travel that requires an overnight stay.

Before planning non-local travel to attend conferences, meetings, seminars or training sessions, every effort should be made to identify local options for comparable conferences, meetings, seminars or training sessions.

Travelers must verify that planned travel is eligible for reimbursement before making travel arrangements.

Non-local travel connected to and/or funded by a grant (or contract) must be made in accordance with the funding agency's travel requirements. Reimbursement is made at whichever rate is lower, the County's rate or the rate set out in the grant (or contract).

Reasons for Non-Local Travel

The County recognizes the following activities as appropriate for non-local travel purposes:

- i. Delivery of legislative testimony:
- ii. As a stipulation or condition of grant funding or otherwise required for County or federal certification.
- iii. Presentation on behalf of the County at a conference or seminar.
- iv. Financial or tax audit.
- v. Site visits or operational evaluations related to departmental improvement efforts.
- vi. Court proceedings or case preparation.
- vii. Law enforcement related investigations.
- viii. Attendance at conferences, meetings, seminars or training sessions for which: the topic is of critical interest to the County; representation at the event is in the best interest of the County, and the topic is related to an employee's

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professional development.

Non-local travel for any other purpose(s) requires the prior written approval of the traveler's bureau chief (or equivalent).

Limits on Participants

Attendance at conferences, meetings, seminars or training sessions held outside the Chicago Metropolitan Area is limited to two employees unless otherwise approved by the travelers' bureau chief (or equivalent). (The Chicago Metropolitan Area is comprised of Cook County, DuPage County, Kane County, Kendall County, Lake County, McHenry County and Will County.)

Non-Local Travel Approval Procedure

If the County has contracted with a travel management company, all travel arrangements are required to be secured through the County's designated travel management company.

If the County has not contracted with a travel management company, travel arrangements are the responsibility of the traveler(s). In such cases, all travel should be by means of the most direct route and the least costly alternative consistent with the itinerary.

All travel outside the Chicago Metropolitan Area requires bureau chief (or equivalent) approval. A completed Travel Request Form ("TRF") must be approved by the traveler's department head and submitted to the bureau chief (or equivalent) as far in advance as possible, but no later than ten (10) business days prior to the date of non-local travel. A sample TRF is attached at Appendix 2.

Supporting documentation should be attached to the TRF. Supporting documentation includes, but is not limited to:

- a. A cover memo from the department head justifying the benefit to the County that will result in the employee attending the conference, meeting, or training, etc.;
- b. An agenda; and
- c. The estimated travel cost (obtained either from the travel management company or prepared by the traveler, as the case may be).

The County is not obligated to reimburse employees for non-local travel expenses that do not comply with the applicable travel requirements or those not previously approved by the traveler's bureau chief (or equivalent).

All expenses incurred during non-local travel are to be charged to the 190 account.

Non-local travel paid by a third party must adhere to these travel guidelines and the County's Ethic's rules.

Non-local travel shall not be reimbursed from petty cash funds.

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Travel Outside the Continental United States (U.S.)

All requests for travel outside the continental U.S. must be submitted to the traveler's executive department head, i.e., the chief administrative officer responsible for the policy and administration of the traveler's department, as far in advance as possible, but not later than fifteen (15) business days prior to travel. The executive department head will seek approval from the President's chief of staff or the chief of staff of the elected official for whom the employee works, as the case may be, and will notify the department of approval or denial.

Travelers should convert all foreign expenses to U.S. currency prior to submitting a Travel Reimbursement Voucher. Official documentation of the exchange rate at the time of travel (i.e., bank receipt) must accompany all original receipts.

Reimbursable Non-Local Travel Expenses

County-owned vehicles.

Employees traveling on County business in a County-owned vehicle are entitled to reimbursement for any out of pocket gas expenditures, parking and toll expenses but not mileage reimbursement. Original receipts must be provided for all expenses.

Employees are responsible for all fines related to parking or moving violations issued while traveling on County business.

Personal Vehicles

Employees may use personal automobiles for non-local business travel within a 300-mile radius of Chicago.

Employees will be reimbursed at the IRS mileage rate, but in no event will the reimbursement exceed the cost of lowest available round trip coach airfare.

Mileage reimbursement includes full reimbursement for the cost of gas and general maintenance.

Parking and toll expenses will be reimbursed separately with original receipts.

Employee must carry liability and property damage insurance for business use of his or her vehicle and submit a copy of these insurance policies to the appropriate personnel within his or her department. The employee's personal insurance is primary in the event of an accident.

Employees are responsible for all fines related to parking or moving violations issued while traveling on County business. Absolutely no exceptions will be made.

Note: Travelers are advised to refer to the County Vehicle Policy Ordinance for other rules and regulations regarding the use of county-owned and personal vehicles.

Car Rental

Car rental will not be approved for travel within the Chicago Metropolitan Area. County Shared Fleet or ZipCar programs should be reserved for such travel.

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Car rental is a reimbursable expense only when transportation by common carrier cannot be utilized or is impractical.

Car rental will be reimbursed at the compact car rate unless the need for a larger car can be justified.

Daily rental rates, taxes, surcharges, gas and car rental insurance are all considered reimbursable items.

Only one car rental will be allowed per trip. This includes trips with multiple travelers unless previously authorized by the traveler's bureau chief (or equivalent).

Employees are responsible for all fines related to parking or moving violations issued while traveling on County business. Absolutely no exceptions will be made.

Original receipts are required for reimbursement.

Common Carrier (Air, Train, Bus)

Reservations and ticket purchases should be made as far in advance as possible to take advantage of any available discount fares and/or government rates.

Tickets are to be booked at the most economical fare available that meets the requirement of the traveler's agenda.

No traveler may select tickets on a specific carrier or airport for any reason while on County business, unless it is the most economical fare.

First-class and business upgrades are prohibited.

Electronic tickets are the only acceptable delivery method of tickets unless this option is not available.

Any charges incurred as a result of changes to an original airline reservation made prior to or during travel are subject to the prior written approval of the traveler's bureau chief (or equivalent).

Original receipts are required for reimbursement.

Ground Transportation (Taxis, Public Transportation, Livery Service)

Transportation to and from the airport is included in the ground transportation allowance in the reimbursement rate.

Shuttle service or public transportation is encouraged.

Limousine or livery service charges to and from airports and railroad stations are reimbursable, where such costs do not exceed the comparable taxi fare.

Uber, Lyft and other similar transportation services are permitted options, and may include

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surcharges and fees. Surcharges and fees may be reimbursable if the total cost is comparable to other ground transportation options, and must be clearly documented to substantiate reimbursement.

Livery service may be used if the cost is less than the cost of a taxi service or other means of transportation.

Gratuity for ground transportation is the sole responsibility of the traveler.

Original receipts are required for reimbursement.

Lodging

Government rates should be requested.

Lodging costs will be reimbursed at the lesser of actual costs or the current federal travel allowance published by the General Services Administration Lodging Rates at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/104711>.

Hotel lodging within the Chicago metropolitan area is not a reimbursable expense.

Lodging costs greater than the published GSA rate require the prior written approval of the bureau chief (or equivalent).

All personal expenses must be paid for separately or deducted from the lodging bill before it is submitted for reimbursement.

Original receipts are required for reimbursement.

Meals and Incidental Expenses

Employees shall receive the lesser of actual costs or the allowance for meals and incidental expenses allowance published by the General Services Administration at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/101518>.

Employees will only receive 75% of the lesser of actual costs or applicable meals and incidentals expenses rate for the first and last day of the trip and 100% for the other days.

There will be no reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses beyond the above rates.

The value of any meal(s) included in registration fees shall, be deducted from the employee's reimbursement.

Original receipts are required for reimbursement.

Conference Registration Fees

Every effort should be made to take advantage of early registration or group rate discounts.

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Additional Reimbursable Expenses

Business-Related Expenses. Business-related expenses incurred while on County travel may be reimbursed at the discretion of the department head. Original receipts must be provided for reimbursement. Examples of acceptable reimbursable business expenses are:

- i. Internet connections
- ii. Sending or receiving faxes
- iii. Photocopying
- iv. Express mail services

Laundry. Employees traveling on County business for three or more consecutive days are entitled to reimbursement for laundry expenses up to a maximum of \$10 per three-day period beginning with the fourth day. Original receipts are required for reimbursement.

Telephone Calls.

- i. If the employee has a County-issued cell phone, that phone should be used for all business calls (unless there is no service).
- ii. When possible, employees should avoid surcharges by using cell.
- iii. For approved international travel, the traveler should contact the Bureau of Technology so that the traveler's calling plan may be temporarily changed to the appropriate calling plan. Business calls may be reimbursed at the discretion of the department head.
- iv. Original receipts are required for reimbursement for business calls made on a personal cell or other phone.

Incidentals. Reimbursement for other incidental expenses will be approved at the discretion of the department head. Original receipts are required to reimbursement traveler for incidentals not listed above.

Non-Reimbursable Non-Local Travel Expenses

Non-reimbursable expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Additional hotel charges for upgrades, special "club" floors, late checkout or early check-in;
- ii. Airline convenience fees (e.g., early check-in, seat upgrades, TSA pre-check)
- iii. Alcoholic beverages;
- iv. Amenities such as movies, health clubs, or in-room bars;
- v. Cancellation charges (unless justified);

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- vi. Child care, baby-sitting, house sitting, or pet sitting costs;
- vii. Cost differential on premium and luxury car rentals or first or business class airline tickets;
- viii. Entertainment, including, but not limited to, exercise facilities, movie rental, videos, games, or other non-business related items;
- ix. Excess baggage fees;
- x. Flight Insurance or other supplemental travel insurance, unless required for international travel and approved by the department head;
- xi. Gasoline costs if mileage reimbursement is used;
- xii. Laundry for trips less than three or more consecutive days;
- xiii. Local transportation charges incurred for personal reasons;
- xiv. Lost or stolen cash or personal property;
- xv. Magazines, books, or other reading materials;
- xvi. Meals included in the cost of registration fees and airfare;
- xvii. Modifications to travel arrangements;
- xviii. Personal items (e.g., toiletries, luggage, clothing, medications, etc.);
- xix. Personal portions of a trip combined with business travel;
- xx. Personal telephone calls;
- xxi. Repairs, towing service, etc. for personal vehicle;
- xxii. Snacks, beverages, etc. outside of a meal;
- xxiii. Spouse, family member(s), and guest travel costs; and
- xxiv. Traffic citations, parking tickets, and other fines.

Reimbursement for Non-Local Travel and Business Expenses

Non-Local Travel Reimbursement Voucher

All claims for reimbursement of non-local travel expenses shall be submitted on the Travel Reimbursement Voucher (“TRV”) and shall be itemized in accordance with these regulations. A sample TRV is attached at Appendix 3.

The TRV shall show the purpose of travel, the dates of travel, the points of departure and destination, mode of transportation, and the cost of the transportation secured or mileage allowance if automobile is used.

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The TRV shall be supported by receipts in all instances for railroad and airplane transportation, for lodging, meals and incidental expense items, and all other items. With respect to travel to conferences, the conference program must be attached to the voucher.

The TRV shall be prepared and signed by the employee who has incurred the expenses.

The employee submitting the TRV is personally responsible for accuracy and propriety. Falsification of a TRV is considered a major cause infraction subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

Any TRV that does not include a copy of the traveler's approved TRF shall not be processed for payment.

Employees shall be reimbursed for airline, hotel, and conference registrations costs after expense is incurred. Airline and conference costs are reimbursable prior to flying or attending the conference as long as the employee shows those costs were paid. Lodging costs will be reimbursed after payment by the employee is made to the hotel.

Employees shall be reimbursed for approved travel related expenses once the trip is complete and the voucher is submitted.

The County will reimburse employees for travel related costs incurred by the employee on their paycheck following the submittal and approval of the TRV.

Approval and Submission of Transportation Expense Vouchers

In order to be eligible for reimbursement, the employee must submit the TRV by no later than the 20th day of the month following the month in which the travel expense was incurred, unless the failure to submit a voucher within the 20 day period is due to extraordinary circumstances.

The TRV shall then be reviewed and approved by the traveler's department head (or a designated representative), whose signature will represent his or her representation that he or she has reviewed the voucher and that the information contained on the voucher is complete and accurate.

Upon approving a TRV, a department head (or a designated representative) and supervisors are certifying:

- v. Appropriateness of the expenditure and reasonableness of the amount;
- vi. Availability of funds;
- vii. Compliance with applicable reimbursement policies; and
- viii. Completeness and accuracy of documentation.

A department must submit the TRV to the Comptroller's Office by no later than the 60th day after the end of the month in which the travel expense was incurred. An employee who submits a voucher within the 20-day submission period will not be denied reimbursement for failure of his/her department to timely submit the voucher to the Comptroller's office. A copy of the

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TRV shall be retained by the department.

Any TRV not prepared in accordance with these regulations, including the proper signatures, will be returned to the originator for corrections.

A request for reimbursement of an expense that does not comply with these guidelines may be denied and treated as a personal expense to the traveler and shall be deducted from the reimbursement due the traveler.

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APPENDIX 1

Travel Expense Voucher

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Travel Request Form

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Travel Reimbursement Voucher