

Travel Authorization and Reimbursement Guidelines

Purpose

The University Travel Program ensures that all University-sponsored travel is conducted safely, appropriately planned, economical, and in full compliance with state, federal, and sponsor regulations. These procedures establish clear standards for authorization, booking, expenses, and reimbursement to promote accountability while supporting the University's mission of education, research, and public service.

Due to the diverse nature of travel and expense scenarios, it is impractical to address every unique situation within these procedures and guidelines. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the traveler or claimant to make decisions that align with the principles of a nonprofit, public institution. Approvers are responsible for evaluating the necessity and reasonableness of the expenses incurred.

Scope

These guidelines apply to all faculty, staff, students, and guests whose travel is funded in whole, in part, or not funded (no cost) by University resources, including grants and contracts naming the University.

Students may travel on behalf of the University for approved academic, co-curricular, or University-related activities (e.g., conferences, performances, competitions), whether or not the travel is part of a class. Departments are responsible for approving the travel and ensuring sufficient budget is available for allowable expenses (such as transportation, lodging, meals, and registration fees), and student travel does not require accompaniment by a faculty or staff member unless otherwise required by the sponsoring department or program.

The following provisions apply to all travel governed by this document.

- Departments may impose stricter requirements.
- Grant sponsored travel must also comply with funding agency regulations.

General Guidelines

Business Purpose vs. Personal Travel

Business Purpose: University travel must have a clear and legitimate business purpose that directly supports the University's mission, operations, academic programs, research, instruction, student activities, outreach, advancement, or other authorized University activities. The primary purpose and

benefit of the travel must be for the University rather than the personal benefit or convenience of the traveler. The business purpose must be specific enough to demonstrate why the travel is necessary.

Personal Travel: Personal travel is travel undertaken primarily for the personal benefit, convenience, or enjoyment of the traveler and is not necessary to conduct University business. Personal expenses and any additional costs resulting from personal travel are the responsibility of the traveler and will not be paid or reimbursed by the University.

Combined Business and Personal Travel: Business and personal travel may be combined when permitted; however, the University will only pay or reimburse expenses related to the business portion of the trip. Any additional costs resulting from personal travel are the responsibility of the traveler.

Travel Accident Insurance

The University's Travel Accident Insurance Program provides coverage only for eligible faculty and staff under the age of 75, both domestically and internationally. Faculty and staff age 75 or older are not covered under this program and should consult with their department regarding alternative insurance arrangements, if applicable. See [Risk Management website](#) for specifics on foreign travel insurance.

Students are not covered under the University's Travel Accident Insurance Program, except when participating in an approved study abroad or University Athletics trip for which applicable coverage has been arranged. Students traveling internationally on other University-related trips should contact the Haenicke Institute for Global Education (HIGE) regarding available student travel insurance options and coverage requirements.

The University's coverage does not extend to personal travel or personal extensions of a University business trip. Travelers are responsible for obtaining and maintaining their own insurance coverage for any personal portion of their trip. The University will not pay for or reimburse the cost of additional travel insurance purchased to cover personal travel or supplemental coverage beyond the University-provided policy.

Travel Authorization

All University sponsored travel must be approved through a Travel Authorization (TA) prior to the travel. To ensure adequate review time and avoid potential delays in the workflow approval process, it is best practice to submit and obtain approval for all University travel through a Travel Authorization (TA) at least 30 days prior to travel. The TA request must include:

- **Business Purpose** – Clearly state the University-related purpose of the trip.
- **Estimated Expenses** – Provide anticipated costs for airfare, lodging, meals, ground transportation, registration fees, and other relevant expenses.
- **Funding Source** – Identify the appropriate fund, department and account code to be charged (if partially or fully funded).

Travel Authorizations are automatically routed to the traveler's supervisor for review and approval. Supervisors confirm the business necessity of the trip, approve travel time and verify that funding is available.

For detailed, step-by-step instructions on completing a Travel Authorization, please refer to the **Travel Authorization User Manual**.

Best Practices

- Submit travel requests early to secure best pricing.
- Use approved University vendors and booking systems.
- Clearly separate personal vs. business expenses.
- Select the most cost-effective and reasonable transportation and lodging with approved vendors where applicable that support the business purpose.
- Review current procedure and guideline requirements, per diem and mileage rates.
- A Travel Authorization is required for **all** university-related travel, including travel conducted while an employee is on sabbatical, regardless of whether the traveler uses a University, personal, or rental vehicle; University aircraft; or is not seeking reimbursement. This requirement is necessary for liability and risk management purposes and must be completed and approved prior to departure.

Student Travel Registration: For **all** University-sponsored student travel to off-campus locations, the sponsoring department must complete the [WMU Student Trips to Off-Campus Locations Form](#) within 30 days of travel. This information is required to support the University's compliance with the Higher Education Act (Clery Act) reporting requirements, including the collection and reporting of applicable crime statistics for qualifying off-campus student travel.

Tip: *In the event of an emergency while traveling, such as a natural disaster, political unrest, accident, or health-related emergency:*

- *If immediate emergency assistance is needed, contact the appropriate local emergency services.*
- *Students traveling internationally: Contact the Haenicke Institute for Global Education (HIGE) for assistance and guidance.*
- *Faculty, staff, and other travelers: Contact the University's insurance provider first to report the emergency and access available assistance. Notify the Office of Risk Management at 269-387-4827 (Michele) or 269-387-4825 (Kyle) to report the incident.*

Allowable vs. Non-Allowable Expenses

Allowable

- Airfare (economy or equivalent)
- Lodging (must reflect standard market-rate accommodations for the region; luxury, upscale, or above-market lodging is not allowable)
- Mileage (per IRS rate or department-imposed rate, if lower)
- Baggage fees
- Per diem meals (per federal rates or department-imposed rate)
- Conference registration
- Ground transportation (bus, train, rental car, rideshare, parking, tolls)
- Gasoline or electric charging fees for rentals
- Reasonable gratuities **
- Laundry for trips over 5 days
- Required vaccines, visas or permits for international travel ***

Non-Allowable

- Airbnb, VBRO, or similar lodging accommodations
- Alcohol (unless pre-approved under limited hosting exceptions)
- Personal or family expenses
- Seat/class upgrades above standard/economy or lounge access
- Entertainment
- Room service or food delivery services
- Fines or penalties
- Damaged, lost or stolen items
- Valet parking
- TSA PreCheck or Global Entry
- Airline club/lounge access
- Auto repairs
- Personal items or souvenirs
- Spouse/dependent travel
- Childcare
- Personal travel expenses and vacation-related costs
- Banking fees
- Passports
- Travel Insurance
- Gas or charging fees when using a personal vehicle and claiming mileage

** Reasonable gratuities of up to 20% are allowable for business-related services, including sit-down meal service (when not included in a per diem), taxi or rideshare transportation, and similar customary services. Gratuities are not reimbursable for housekeeping, hotel porters or baggage handlers, concierge services, or other discretionary personal services. Excessive or duplicate gratuities (e.g., tipping when a mandatory service charge has already been added) are not reimbursable or allowable. Cash tips are not reimbursable.

*** Travelers must first utilize their personal health insurance coverage for required travel vaccinations. The University will cover required vaccination costs only after personal health insurance has been applied.

Travel Procedures

Air Travel

- All air travel must be booked with Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP), the University's preferred vendor, via agent or Lightning. If there is a valid business reason why you cannot book with CTP, please fill out the [WMU Travel Policy Deviation Recovery Form](#).
- Travelers must book the lowest available standard, economy or equivalent fare through CTP while exercising professional judgment by comparing non-refundable and refundable ticket options, recognizing that non-refundable fares may result in unrecoverable costs if travel is canceled, whereas refundable fares may allow transfer of ticket or reimbursement. It is highly encouraged to purchase refundable tickets if there is a chance the flight will not take place.
- Travelers are responsible for understanding airline baggage policies.
- Air travel booked with CTP will be directly billed to the department fund and cost center associated with the Travel Authorization number provided.

Guest Travel

Travel for non-employees (guests) conducting University business must be coordinated and arranged by the sponsoring department. All guest travel must be pre-approved through a Travel Authorization by the sponsoring department prior to initiating any travel arrangements. The sponsoring department is responsible for ensuring compliance with University travel procedures and guidelines, confirming budget availability, and providing required traveler information in advance. Once the Travel Authorization is approved, the department must complete a [Guest Travel Form](#) within the CTP portal prior to booking any travel. Ensure that the approved TA is included in the form. Upon completion of the Guest Travel Form, the guest may work directly with CTP to arrange airfare. Guests who attempt to contact CTP or arrange travel without a completed Guest Travel Form will not be assisted by CTP.

All guest airfare must be purchased as refundable tickets. Airline tickets are issued in the guest's name, and if the trip does not occur, the ticket and any associated airline credit remains the property of the guest and cannot be transferred to or used by the University. However, when a refundable ticket is purchased and later canceled, the refund will be returned to the original form of payment, which is the University's Hybrid/Travel Card.

Reimbursement to guests should be limited to allowable expenses and processed in accordance with Accounts Payable procedures. Departments should avoid having guests incur and seek reimbursement for travel costs whenever possible.

Unused Tickets

- If unable to complete travel, the traveler must cancel tickets within the booking tool or with a CTP agent prior to departure.
- The value of unused tickets purchased by the University must be applied to a future University business trip; unused ticket value cannot be used for personal travel.
- If the unused ticket is 60 days or less from expiration, the Travel Administrator will determine final disposition.

Grant-Funded Air Travel

- Federally funded trips must comply with the [Fly America Act](#) and use U.S. carriers at customary standard, economy or equivalent rates, except when:
 - Routing would be excessively circuitous.
 - Travel occurs at unreasonable hours.
 - Duration would be unreasonably prolonged.
 - Costs would increase overall.
 - Medical needs require accommodation.

Justification for any exception to the federal requirement must be documented in the travel expense reimbursement report.

Lodging

- Travelers should book standard, non-luxury accommodations.
- Conference hotels may be used if booked at the official conference rate.
- “No show” charges are non-reimbursable unless extenuating circumstances are documented.
- Shared lodging with non-University individuals is reimbursed at the single occupancy rate or proportionate share when costs are divided.
- Lodging must be booked and paid for with the traveler's personal card.
- Overnight travel is allowable when an employee's assigned duties require travel that extends beyond a standard workday and necessitates an overnight stay to fulfill University business objectives. The travel destination must be at least 50 miles from the employee's primary work location or primary residence, using whichever location is closer to the destination.
- Reimbursement for lodging is limited to the period necessary to conduct official University business. Lodging the night prior to a business event is allowable only when same-day travel is not reasonable due to schedule constraints or would not permit the employee to obtain necessary rest. Lodging on the final day of the event is not reimbursable unless the employee cannot complete the trip safely without obtaining sleep or rest, there is an unavailability of reasonable transportation options or when an additional overnight stay results in a lower overall cost to the University.

Ground Travel

Rental Cars

- Must be reserved through Enterprise, the University's preferred vendor. If there is a valid business reason why you cannot book with Enterprise fill out the [WMU Travel Policy Deviation Recovery Form](#).
- Compact, standard, or intermediate vehicles are expected. Larger vehicles require justification.
- Drivers must:
 - Inspect vehicles at pickup/return, noting any damage (photos recommended).
 - Report accidents to the rental agency immediately.
 - Separate personal vs. business use.
 - Rental Car Insurance: Vehicles rented through Enterprise include Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) and limited liability insurance. When travelers cannot rent through Enterprise and rent from a non-contracted rental agency, it is required to purchase the rental company's insurance coverage.
- The minimum permissible age of a driver is 21 for standard vehicles and 25 for large passenger vans. The University reserves the right to require driver authorization for individuals who are neither employees nor students driving on University-sponsored business. Risk Management reserves the right to remove drivers from the authorized driver list due to excessive University claim(s) activity or any violation of University policy.
- 12 passenger vans require special certification. 15 passenger vans are strictly prohibited for University travel.
- Rental vehicles must be returned with the appropriate fuel level as required by the rental agreement. Travelers should not elect the rental company's prepaid or pre-fuel option.

Tip: Enrollment in [Enterprise's Emerald Club](#) is recommended for upgrades and efficiency.

Personal Vehicle Use

- For roundtrip travel by car, employees may utilize their own vehicle and receive mileage reimbursement, if deemed the most cost-effective means of travel. Reimbursement will occur at current IRS rate or department rate, whichever is the lesser. As best practice, for any roundtrip travel by car that is greater than 200 miles /day, renting a car is generally a more cost-effective solution.
- Only the owners of the vehicle may claim reimbursement when sharing rides.
- Reimbursement is based on the lesser of home-to-destination or office-to-destination mileage.
- Personal insurance applies.
- Traffic or parking violations cannot be reimbursed by any University funds.
- Mileage reimbursement is not permitted for local travel, including errands or incidental trips within Kalamazoo and the surrounding area. Mileage reimbursement will be approved when a trip exceeds 20 miles one way from the traveler's primary campus or home office. An exception may apply for local travel under 20 miles one way if there is a documented academic or clinical nexus associated with the trip; in such cases, the business purpose and academic connection must be clearly stated on the travel reimbursement request.
- Employees who receive a University-provided car stipend are not eligible for mileage reimbursement for the use of their personal vehicle for University business.

Other Ground Transportation

- Rideshare/taxi services are reimbursable for business purposes with justification.
- Train or bus travel is reimbursable when cost-effective and practical; standard/economy class only.

Meals

- Meal reimbursement will be based on [IRS meal per diem rates](#) excluding the incidental portion or department rates, whichever is lesser. Individual meal expenses will not be reimbursed based on actual receipts or costs in order to prevent duplicate reimbursement ("double dipping").
- First and last days of travel meal per diems are calculated at 75%, irrespective of the time of day that the traveler leaves or arrives back home.
- For international travel, the University will reimburse for meals and mileage in accordance with the [U.S. Defense Travel Management Office's OCONUS rates](#).
- Meals provided as part of a conference's registration, hotel stay, or other paid event must be deducted from the per diem claim and result in a prorated day. A conference agenda must be included as supporting documentation to identify any meals provided, ensuring accurate per diem calculation.
- Non-overnight trips are not eligible for meal reimbursement.
- Only group meals that include students or external parties may be reimbursed based on actual receipts. In such cases, it is the traveler's responsibility to appropriately reduce their per diem claim to account for any group meals paid with University funds. Meal receipts must contain a stated business purpose and list of attendees.
- For group travel with students or external parties, departments are expected to plan meals in a reasonable and cost-effective manner and ensure expenses are necessary and appropriate for the travel purpose.

Sales Tax Exemption

- The University is exempt from [Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois sales/use tax](#).
- Travelers must provide the University's Tax Exempt Form at the point of sale.
- Sales taxes paid are non-reimbursable. It is the traveler's responsibility to recover any incorrectly paid tax.
- Sales tax exemption does not apply to hotel or restaurant taxes.

Cash Advances

- Provided only in **limited**, case-by-case situations when prepayment or reimbursement is not possible. Cash advances are limited to University-sponsored travel involving students and are not available for individual employee travel.
- Requests must be submitted at least 14 days prior to departure through the AP Voucher process.
- Cash advances must be fully reconciled within 30 days of the employee's return from travel. Reconciliation requires submission of supporting documentation for all expenses incurred, and total documented expenses must equal the amount of the cash advance. Any funds not spent must be returned to the Accounts Payable Office within the same 30-day period.
- Failure to reconcile or return unspent funds within 30 days may result in the outstanding balance being deducted from payroll and/or treated as a taxable benefit to the employee, in accordance with IRS requirements.
- For cash advances for student per diem, students must submit a signed acknowledgment for the receipt of funds.

International Travel

Employees traveling outside of the United States on University business must obtain all required approvals before making travel arrangements or incurring expenses. International travel requests should be submitted sufficiently in advance to allow for all required reviews and approvals.

International travelers are responsible for:

- Obtaining all required travel authorizations prior to booking travel.
- Ensuring their passport is valid for at least six (6) months beyond the planned return date, if required by the destination country.
- Obtaining any required visas, entry permits, vaccinations, or other travel documentation.
- Complying with all applicable U.S. and foreign laws, regulations, and University policies.
- Receiving insurance card and app information from Risk Management.
- Receiving approval from Risk Management and/or Export Control, if applicable.

High-Risk International Countries

Travelers are responsible for reviewing the travel advisories for their destination before undertaking any international travel. Travel to destinations designated as Level 3 or Level 4 by the [U.S. Department of State](#) and/or the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) requires enhanced review and approval due to increased health, safety, security, or geopolitical risks. This

includes State Department Level 3 (Reconsider Travel) or Level 4 (Do Not Travel) advisories and CDC Level 3 (Reconsider Nonessential Travel) or Level 4 (Avoid All Travel) alerts.

In addition to the standard Travel Authorization process, travel to Level 3 or Level 4 countries require additional Risk Management review:

1. Written Justification: The traveler or department must prepare a written justification explaining the business necessity of the travel and the reason the travel is required despite the elevated country risk level.
2. Risk Management Review: The written justification must be submitted to Risk Management for review. Risk Management will evaluate the identified risks and determine whether the travel may proceed and whether additional safety, security, or risk mitigation measures are required.
3. Risk Mitigation Requirements: Any requirements identified by Risk Management must be completed and documented prior to departure. Travel may not proceed until the required approvals and risk mitigation measures have been completed.

The University reserves the right to deny or restrict travel to high-risk destinations based on safety, legal, insurance, or operational considerations. No undergraduate travel will be approved for a Level 4 country.

Export Control Compliance

International travel conducted on behalf of the University must comply with all applicable U.S. export control laws, regulations, and University policies.

Prior to departure, travelers are responsible for:

- Including a line item for “Airfare_International” in the TA to ensure it’s automatically routed to Export Control for review. This applies even if airfare is not being purchased with University funds or the traveler is traveling by ground transportation (e.g., driving to Canada). If there is no University airfare expense, enter \$0.01 for the International Air line item to trigger the required Export Control review.
- Ensuring all planned activities comply with export control requirements.
- Obtaining additional export control review if the scope of travel changes and promptly reporting any export control concerns that arise during travel.

Travelers may not transport, disclose, or share classified, export-controlled, proprietary, confidential, or otherwise restricted information, software, technology, equipment, or research materials without prior authorization. Presentations, lectures, and professional discussions conducted during international travel must be limited to information that is publicly available or otherwise approved for release.

Failure to comply with export control requirements may result in denial of travel, denial of reimbursement, disciplinary action, and applicable civil or criminal penalties.

Student International Travel

All students traveling internationally on University-related business or with a WMU approved RSO must register their travel with the Haenicke Institute for Global Education (HIGE) prior to

departure. This requirement applies to all student international travel, including travel not part of a formal study abroad program.

HIGE maintains a record of student international travel and provides resources to support students traveling abroad, including information regarding student travel insurance options, health and safety resources, and other international travel requirements. Students are responsible for completing the required registration and reviewing the resources provided by HIGE prior to departure.

Foreign Expenses

Expenses incurred in a foreign currency will be reimbursed in U.S. dollars using the exchange rate in effect on the date the expense was incurred or the rate charged by the traveler's credit card or financial institution, when supported by documentation.

Receipts submitted in a foreign language or foreign currency should include a translated description of the expense, when necessary, and the applicable currency conversion or exchange rate documentation to support the reimbursement request. Travelers are encouraged to use a recognized currency conversion source when credit card documentation is not available.

- [XE Currency Converter](#)
- [Oanda Currency Converter](#)
- [Yahoo Currency Converter](#)

The University reserves the right to verify exchange rates and adjust reimbursement amounts when appropriate.

International Guests Traveling to the United States

All departments hosting an international visitor must complete the [International Visitor Registration Form](#) with Export Control prior to the visitor's arrival on campus.

Departments sponsoring international guests traveling to the United States for University business are responsible for coordinating all travel-related payments and reimbursements in accordance with applicable federal regulations and University policies.

Any reimbursement of travel expenses for a foreign national must be reviewed and approved by the University's Corporate Reporting & Taxation Department before any payment is made or reimbursement is processed. This review includes verification of the visitor's immigration status, tax reporting requirements, and eligibility for payment under applicable federal regulations. Please utilize the [Foreign Nationalist Checklist](#) to ensure compliance.

Travel Expense Voucher

Travelers seeking reimbursement for authorized University travel must submit a Travel Expense Voucher with all required supporting documentation within 30 calendar days of the completion of travel and departments reserve the right to deny reimbursement requests submitted more than 60 days after the completion of travel. Timely submission helps ensure compliance with IRS accountable plan rules and University procedures. **Travel expenses are not eligible for reimbursement until after the travel has occurred.**

Traveler Responsibilities

The traveler is responsible for submitting a complete and accurate Travel Expense Voucher and ensuring all expenses comply with University procedures and guidelines.

The reimbursement request must include, as applicable:

- Itemized and legible receipts for all required expenses.
- Proof of payment (e.g., credit card receipt or statement). Proof of payment is not an acceptable replacement for itemized receipts.
- Mileage documentation identifying the total mileage, the travel destination and business purpose.
- Conference agenda, meeting itinerary, or other documentation supporting the business purpose of the trip.
- Documentation supporting any required foreign currency conversion, if applicable.
- Per diem documentation identifying the applicable rates for the destination.

Travelers are responsible for excluding personal or other non-allowable expenses from the reimbursement request. Incentives or rewards, including frequent flyer miles, travel credits, vouchers, coupons, gift cards, or other non-cash payment methods, are not considered out-of-pocket expenses and are not reimbursable.

Travel expenses may not be split between multiple Travel Expense Vouchers or travelers. If an expense is shared, only one traveler shall be reimbursed.

Approver Responsibilities

Approvers are responsible for ensuring travel expenses are reasonable, necessary, and comply with University procedures and guidelines before approving reimbursement requests. Approvers must:

- Carefully review all reconciled expenses and uploaded documentation.
- Confirm that each expense aligns with University procedures and guidelines and business need.
- Verify that expenses are charged to the correct fund, department and account.
- Reject or return any expense lacking appropriate justification, documentation or coding.
- Take corrective action or escalate concerns when necessary.

If an Approver has questions about an expense, they may contact the traveler for clarification, consult with the Department Head or Business Manager, or reach out to the Travel Administrator for procedures and guidelines guidance. Suspected fraud, abuse, or willful non-compliance must be reported directly to the Travel Administrator and/or Internal Audit for investigation.

Accounts Payable Responsibilities

Accounts Payable will review Travel Expense Vouchers for compliance, accuracy, completeness, and appropriate supporting documentation prior to processing reimbursement. Accounts Payable reserves the right to deny reimbursement for expenses that are unsupported, non-compliant, or otherwise determined to be unallowable under University procedures and guidelines or applicable regulations.

Approved reimbursements will be processed through Accounts Payable and will generally not be considered taxable, provided the reimbursement complies with University procedures and IRS accountable plan requirements.

Travel reimbursement documentation is subject to audit and must be retained in accordance with the University's record retention policy.

Non-Compliance with Travel Procedures and Guidelines

The University reserves the right to deny reimbursement of any travel-related expenses if an individual fails to follow established travel procedures and guidelines, including submitting expenses in a timely manner or failing to submit a travel authorization prior to traveling. When University funds have been used to directly pay for travel expenses that do not comply with University policy, the University may require repayment of those funds through payroll deduction or direct reimbursement to the University.

Exceptions to travel procedures and guidelines may be requested in advance by completing and submitting the [WMU Travel Policy Deviation Recovery Form](#) for review and approval by the appropriate approving authority. When an exception is approved in advance, eligible expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with the approved exception.

The [WMU Travel Policy Deviation Recovery Form](#) may also be used after the fact when travel procedures or guidelines were not followed. Submission of the form does not guarantee approval or reimbursement. After-the-fact requests will be reviewed based on the circumstances and may be denied, in which case the expense will remain the responsibility of the traveler and/or any University funds already expended may be subject to recovery. Reimbursement or resolution of University-paid costs will not be processed until the form has been reviewed and a determination has been made by the appropriate approving authority.

When using a University Card for travel-related purchases, travelers must comply with these Procedures and Guidelines, the University's Procurement Card Procedures and Guidelines, and any other applicable University policies governing the use of University funds.