



Western Michigan University

Travel Policy and Procedures

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OVERVIEW

Purpose and Scope:

The objective of these guidelines is to provide Western Michigan University travelers with the policies and procedures for receiving authorization to travel, reporting expenses, and obtaining reimbursement when traveling on University business. This policy shall apply to all officially approved travelers (employees, students or external parties traveling on university business) of Western Michigan University.

Policy:

University travelers are required to complete a travel authorization form before departure and receive approval from the department head, whether reimbursed or not. Travelers should also comply with any other authorization procedures required by their departments. Upon return, University travelers should promptly submit a travel expense voucher with original receipts for reimbursement. The University will reimburse officially approved travel expenses. The extent of reimbursement will depend on budgetary procedures as determined by each department and compliance with these guidelines. Any reimbursement will be based on travel by the usual, direct route. If travelers plan to use a less direct route, or a more expensive mode of travel than may be authorized as reimbursable, the travelers must bear the extra costs. Local travel is normally not reimbursable.

All University air/rail travel will be directly billed to the department's fund and cost center. Any misrepresentation or falsification of any expenses or supporting documents, such as receipts or bills, will be pursued in compliance with the appropriate Rules of Conduct as contained in the Human Resources Policies/Procedures Manual, or the bargaining unit contract when appropriate. Employees will receive travel reimbursements in their paychecks. Non-employees and students will be reimbursed via a check issued by the Accounts Payable department.

All University travelers are responsible:

- to exercise good judgment and discretion in spending University funds,
- to complete expense reports properly and promptly.

All department heads and vice presidents are responsible:

- to see that the travelers under their jurisdiction are fully aware of the University travel policy and reimbursement procedures,
- to approve only reasonable, proper, and necessary expenses.

AAA is responsible:

- to book requested reservations in a prompt and accurate manner,
- to advise University travelers

TRAVEL PROCEDURES

Before Departure:

University travelers are required, as far in advance as possible:

- complete a Travel Authorization/Reservation request form. Forms must be completed online using the University Travel Authorization Online System. <https://auxe.wmich.edu/travel-authorization/>. This should be done before booking a flight on Res-X. Res-X will hold your reservation for 24 hours. However, if a price change occurs before the authorization is received; the new flight price will be charged.
- verify that the Travel Authorization has been approved and submitted to AAA. AAA will not book ticket requests until the completed form has been submitted
- all purchases of tickets for air transportation must be procured through AAA. However, consistent with the philosophy of attempting to procure travel at the lowest cost, if you find a lower price from an outside source, contact AAA at (800) 854-5044 to see if they can match the price. If they are unable to match the price a waiver can be obtained by providing documentation to AAA of the lower fare as long as it is done before the tickets are purchased. *Purchases of airline tickets from another source without a waiver will not be reimbursed.*

During the Trip:

University travelers should:

- charge all business related expenses to their personal credit card
- save all receipts for reimbursement

Upon Return:

University travelers should:

- promptly fill out a Travel Expense Voucher, obtain the proper signatures, and submit the completed Travel Expense Voucher with original receipts to Accounts Payable.
- Pay off personal credit card with the reimbursement for their Travel Expense Voucher.

AIR TRAVEL

Airline Contracts:

From time to time, the University may enter into contracts with air carriers. Purchasing will provide information regarding these contracts. Employees are expected to use these carriers whenever possible. If other carriers offer a better fair or more convenient itinerary, University travelers have the option to use them, as long as reservations are made through AAA.

Change of Plans:

Changes made in travel plans after the reservations have been booked or during the trip itself should be coordinated through AAA.

Class of Service:

When traveling on either domestic or international routes, University travelers should request the lowest available fare in coach class. Travel in any other class of service must be pre-approved by the appropriate vice president or their designees.

Fares:

Travelers should notify AAA of their travel plans as far in advance as possible in order to take advantage of any special rates offered by the airlines.

Flight Information:

After AAA receives a copy of the Travel Authorization/Reservation Request form the ticket will be booked.

Frequent Flier Mileage:

University travelers are allowed to keep their own frequent flier miles. However, travelers should keep in mind the importance of obtaining the lowest available fares.

Payment:

Air travel will be directly billed to your department's fund and cost center and does not get included on the Travel Expense Voucher.

OTHER MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

Air Charter Travel:

All requests for charter planes must be requested through the WMU Purchasing Department.

Car Rental:

Western Michigan University has a negotiated contract with Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Use of rental cars at travel destinations is limited to circumstances where other transportation is either more expensive or impractical.

Personal Car:

Reimbursement for travel by private car will generally be authorized under only one of the following circumstances:

- when common carrier service is not available without undue loss of time,
- when two or more staff members are eligible for similar travel authorization and their driving together would mean an overall savings to the University (the department head is responsible for making such a determination before approving the travel request),
- when use of an automobile will permit the traveler to make stops en route and perform duties more effectively,
- when it will cost the University no more than by other means,
- when the use of an automobile will not require the traveler to be away from duties for a substantially longer period than travel by common carrier. Private car mileage, when authorized, will be reimbursed for either in-state or out-of-state trips at the amount specified in Internal Revenue Service regulations. If circumstances require additional driving within the vicinity, the traveler should show this mileage separately. Bridge and turnpike tolls will be reimbursed. Receipts should be obtained if possible. All mileage

must be shown from point to point. Accounts Payable will verify the reasonableness of the mileage using the Internet mapping program.

Rail and Bus:

Trains and buses are acceptable optional means of transportation. In cases of long distances, time considerations are often restrictive. Travelers should use coach class unless pre-approved by the appropriate vice president. Reservations may be made using AAA.

Taxi/Bus/Shuttle:

Shuttle service should be given preference whenever available and economical. Taxi trips are acceptable when necessary to and from airports. Travelers must obtain receipts for reimbursement.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car (Car Rental):

Information concerning Enterprise Car Rental can be obtained by accessing the University Travel Website.

LIABILITY AND PROPERTY DAMAGE INSURANCE

For Personal Cars Used on University Business:

Liability coverage provided for the use of personal cars is excess coverage; that is, the coverage carried by the owner would apply first, in the event of an accident, with costs above those limits being covered by WMU's policy. Physical damage insurance for personal cars being used on University business is not provided.

For Rental Cars Used on University Business:

Rental cars are covered under the University's coverage for both liability and physical damage. There is a \$5,000 deductible for physical damage which would be the responsibility of the department. The coverage is secondary to any additional coverage either purchased or provided through a separate arrangement. Liability and damage Insurance is included with WMU rentals from Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Since the \$5,000 deductible for physical damage would be the responsibility of the department they may want to consider purchasing the physical damage coverage when renting from an agency other than Enterprise. This cost and exposure should be taken into consideration when opting not to go with the University's contract with Enterprise

Student Travel on Field Trips and Other Outings:

Student field trips, which are part of organized course instruction, may be taken to vital places of interest. Student participation in field trips is on a voluntary basis and students must cover their own costs. Students may drive Enterprise Rental vehicles on field trips. No insurance is provided by the University on any student-owned vehicle; therefore, their use is not authorized.

LODGING

Change of Plans:

If travel plans must be changed, it is the traveler's responsibility to contact the hotel, in accordance to the hotel's cancellation policy, to cancel the reservation. Please obtain and keep the cancellation number to assure that a "no-show" charge will be avoided.

Conferences:

If traveling to a conference that has prearranged hotel space, the traveler makes their own reservations. Reservations for non-prearranged hotel space can be made using AAA. All authorized hotel expenses will be reimbursed directly to the traveler.

Payment:

University travelers need to provide AAA with a personal credit card to guarantee hotel reservations for late arrival. Upon departure, travelers should obtain a detailed receipt. A statement may not be used in the place of receipts.

Reservations and Reimbursement:

Hotel reservations can be made using Res X or AAA. The University will reimburse authorized lodging expenses at the single occupancy business rate. Original hotel bills are required for reimbursement. The exception is tipping, which will be reimbursed if reasonable and customary.

Shared Accommodations:

When an authorized traveler shares a hotel room with non-University individuals, such as family members or colleagues from other institutions, reimbursement will be as follows:

- if shared with non-University individuals, and there is no increase in cost, the University traveler, will be fully reimbursed for the single occupancy rate.
- if shared with non-University individuals and there is an increase in cost, the University traveler will be reimbursed the single occupancy rate. If the cost is shared between the occupants, the traveler will be reimbursed the proportionate amount of the room cost. The receipt must show the total amount paid for multiple occupancy and that the University traveler was accompanied by one or more persons. If this information is not on the hotel invoice, a list of people who shared the room should be added.

MEALS

Conference Meals:

If the cost of meals arranged by a conference or special meeting exceeds the limitations below, actual expenses will be reimbursed. The University traveler must provide a listing of expenses on a program or paid receipt or letter of approval from the department head.

When attending a conference or seminar that does not require overnight travel, any costs associated with meals, not included in the conference/seminar fees, will not be reimbursed by the University. This includes both in- and out-of-town conferences and seminars.

Hosting Meals:

The University welcomes visitors, guests and employment applicants and recognizes that University staff members may be required to act as host. The University recognizes hosting as an appropriate expense of University funds if hosting activities contribute to, or result from, legitimate University-related business. Each department is expected to use prudence in determining the appropriateness of the hosting function.

Local business meals and expenses incurred by employees while hosting University guests will be reimbursed at actual cost within the constraints of good taste and reasonableness. The names and business affiliations of the guests for whom the meals were purchased and the date, location and business purpose of the meal expense must be documented on the voucher. In addition, meal receipts must be submitted with the Travel Expense Voucher. Acceptable meal receipts include charge card receipts, cash register receipts and hotel receipts with meal costs itemized. Order stubs with handwritten totals are not acceptable. Reimbursement will not be made for alcoholic beverages using Fund 11 accounts. Reimbursement for alcohol out of other funds may be made providing there are proper approvals and business reasons.

When it is in best interest of the University, business meals may be purchased for customers, vendors and others with whom the University has business dealings. Examples of such situations include, but are not limited to, retreats, workshops, potential donor meals and committee meetings. All business meals are to be documented with individual's present, business affiliation(s), the purpose of the meeting and the date and place of the meeting.

Meals – University Employees/Faculty:

Meal expenditures in connection with meetings of University personnel are generally not reimbursable. However, circumstances may arise that may warrant the use of University funds for meals attended exclusively by University personnel. This is appropriate only under certain circumstances whereby the business meal is considered necessary in order to conduct University business and such business purpose is clearly stated on the voucher. Reasonable judgment, applying a conservative perspective, must be exercised when determining the appropriateness of such meals.

When conducting employee workshops or committee and faculty/staff meetings, campus facilities should be used whenever possible. Reimbursement shall generally be limited to rolls or other low cost food and beverages.

The University may sponsor social events where only University personnel are present for staff appreciation/recognition. Since the University is a public institution, it is the fiduciary responsibility of those at the University to authorize such activities in an appropriate manner. Such activities are to be non-routine in nature and campus facilities should be used whenever possible. These events are to be authorized by the vice president in the area.

All such meals referred to above are to include on the voucher the individuals present, business affiliation(s), the business purpose, the date and place of the meeting.

Per Diem:

In order to qualify for reimbursement of meal expenses, travel must include an overnight stay. Because Treasury Department regulations classify meal reimbursements during day trips as taxable income, the University policy is that there is not reimbursement for meals if an overnight stay is not part of the trip. An exception of that rule involves situations where University business is conducted during a meal. This exception normally requires the presence of non-University personnel.

The daily reimbursable maximum is \$45.00. The individual reimbursable meal expenses, including tips, are:

- breakfast: \$8.00
- lunch: \$12.00
- dinner: \$25.00

Meals for one day trips may not be reimbursed. For meals exceeding per diem, actual and reasonable expenses will be reimbursed with Vice President's approval.

MISCELLANEOUS

Gift and/or Contract/Grant Funds:

University travelers using contract, gift or grant funds should follow the regular University travel policy unless there are specific restrictions provided by the contract, gift or grant.

Non-reimbursable Expenses:

Any expense that is not directly related to the business purpose of the trip is non-reimbursable. Examples include such items as movie rentals, personal telephone calls, laundry service, athletic facilities fees, etc.

Passport and Visa Information:

Obtaining a passport and/or visa may be necessary when traveling on international flights. As the requirements and processing time can vary, it is important that University travelers submit the application well in advance of travel. AAA can provide current information about obtaining a passport, visa or required photographs.

Tax-Exempt Status:

University travelers on authorized, University business are exempt from some state sales taxes. Travelers should seek to maximize this benefit to the University by showing the tax-exempting document. A copy of this form is available at: http://www.obf.wmich.edu/accounting-services/docs/mich_salestax_cert.pdf

Telephone Expenses:

All business-related calls are reimbursable.

Reimbursement or Payment of Moving Expenses:

Reimbursement or direct payment of employee moving expenses will be made only when it becomes necessary in employment negotiations to attract highly qualified candidates to regular, full-time academic and administrative positions at Western Michigan University. (See the Accounts Payable Procedures or Moving Expense Policy manuals for the current regulations and rates.)