

# Travel Policy: Lodging

## Introduction

The Lodging Travel Policy articulates those expenses that are reimbursable for lodging when an overnight stay is required.

The purpose of the Travel Policies is to provide clear policies and procedures that are compliant with state and federal regulations, promote safe travel, and allow for reasonable and manageable travel expenses while maintaining the necessary controls and accountability.

This policy is organized as follows:

- Lodging
- Travel Advances

Additional Travel Policies for the various components of travel can be found in the Related Policies section below.

## Policy Statement

The Travel Policy on Lodging applies those who travel on behalf of the University. Travel Lodging expenses for overnight stays will be paid by the University if they are reasonable, appropriately documented, properly allocated and authorized, must be accommodated by the relevant operating budget or sponsored project funding, and within the guidelines of these policies.

Through this policy the University strives to promote safe and economical University travel while maintaining the necessary controls, accountability, compliance with applicable federal and state laws, and administrative efficiency. All University funds-including grants and contracts shall be used in a reasonable and prudent manner and only for activities related to Western Michigan University's primary mission of education, research and public service.

Additionally:

- Departments may elect to impose stricter budgetary controls over travel expenditures than those required by this policy.
- Travel charged to a sponsored project should follow the guidelines set forth by this policy unless the funding agency imposes greater restrictions.
- Intentional disregard for the University's travel policy and procedures may be considered grounds for disciplinary action, and/or for prosecution in the case of fraudulent misrepresentation of travel expenses.
- The authority for determining which travel expenditures are reimbursable under a particular grant lies with Grants and Contracts.

## Lodging

Western Michigan University reimburses employees for lodging while travelling on university business.

- Travelers should book standard room accommodations at non-luxury/moderately priced hotels.
- When traveling for a conference it is appropriate to stay at the hotel hosting the conference, however,
  - The room booked must be at the conference rate.
  - Travelers will not be reimbursed for “no show” charges except under extenuating circumstances, which must be documented in the expense report.
  - Foreign Lodging per diem.
    - The Federal lodging per diem rate is used only when visiting countries where receipts are difficult to obtain.
    - For foreign travel where lodging receipts are available, a per diem should not be used.
    - Use of a per diem in lieu of receipts should be for the purpose of administrative ease and the traveler should neither gain nor lose personal funds as a result of the travel.
- 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.

## Travel Advances

Travel advances are generally available to paid faculty and staff of Western Michigan University to assist in defraying out of pocket cash while travelling for an extended period of time. Travel advances are:

- Issued only for daily and per diem expenses. Prepaid items such as transportation and conference registration are processed using a travel expense report.

- Travel advances will not be issued more than two weeks prior to the scheduled departure date and must be cleared within two weeks of the completion of a trip.
  - Request for any additional payment, advance or reimbursement will not be processed for any traveler with an outstanding advance that is more than two weeks beyond the established trip return date.
  - Failure to account for a cash advance after repeated attempts to contact the traveler will result in reporting the advance to the IRS on the traveler's W-2 and withholding taxes on the advance amount from the traveler's paycheck.
    - Per IRS regulation, once an unsettled cash advance has to be added to a W-2 it cannot be reversed – even if settled.
    - The university does not issue long-term operation advances.

## **Responsibilities**

**Controller's Office:** The Controller's Office ensures compliance with federal and state statutes and process transactions.

**Department Managers:** Department Managers ensure compliance with this and other relevant University Policies. The department manager approves air travel reimbursements.

**Traveler:** The Traveler is responsible to provide all receipts and travel information to the Department Manager within two weeks of completion of the trip.

Additionally:

- When a Travel Advance is used the travel advance is required to be cleared at the time receipts and travel information is submitted to Payroll and Disbursements.
- The Traveler will return any unused travel advance to Western Michigan University.

## **Procedures**

**Authorization:** Create an online travel authorization using your BroncoNet ID and password in the Employee Self Service portal as far in advance as possible.

**Place your reservations:** Once your travel authorization has been approved you can proceed with placing your reservations.

**Lodging:** The detailed hotel bill (folio) is required for reimbursement of lodging expenses.

- Receipt needs to show a \$0.00 balance due.
- Personal expenses should be labeled on the hotel bill and not claimed on the employee reimbursement request.

Some small hotel/motel and bed & breakfast lodging do not provide and itemized bill.

- The receipt from the establishment and record of payment will accepted for reimbursement.