Travel Policy: Air Travel

Introduction

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:

- Air Travel Expenses
- Air Travel Charged to Grants
- Travel Advances

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

Policy Statement

The Air Travel Policy applies those who travel on behalf of the University. University travel will be paid by the University if travel expenses 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 polices.

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.
- The authority for determining which travel expenditures are reimbursable under a particular grant or contract lies with Grants and Contracts.
Air Travel Expenses

Western Michigan University provides air travel when traveling on university business.

- Travelers should secure air travel through Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP).
- Travelers must purchase economy class airline tickets unless the trip meets the requirements for business class or when an exception is required due to health or medical requirement for domestic or international flights.
- Traveling on either domestic or international routes, University travelers should request the lowest available fare in economy class.
- Travelers should notify Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) of their travel plans as far in advance as possible in order to take advantage of any special rates offered by the airlines.
- Air travel will be directly billed to your department’s fund and cost center that you report to.

  - Basic economy fares are available for booking through Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) and through the Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) Lightning portal.
    - These fares are nonrefundable and non-changeable.
    - If a travel event that includes airline is voluntarily canceled by the employee, departments may require travelers to reimburse the department for the airfare expense.
    - Travelers are responsible for understanding baggage policies and restrictions prior to departure.

  - Southwest Airline flights are available for booking through Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) through the Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) Lightning portal.
    - These flights are instant purchase.
    - Please ensure that travel authorizations are fully approved and in Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) queue prior to attempting to book with Southwest.
    - If a travel event that includes airline is voluntarily canceled by the employee, departments may require travelers to reimburse the department for the airfare expense.
    - Travelers are responsible for understanding baggage policies and restrictions prior to departure.
Air Travel Charged to Grants

Travel on non-federally funded trips require compliance with the University policy as noted above.

Travelers on federally-funded trips must travel on U.S. carriers at economy rates. Please see the Fly America Act policy. Airfare costs in excess of the lowest available commercial discount airfare or customary standard (economy or equivalent) airfare on a U.S. carrier are not allowed except when the lower cost transportation would:

- Require circuitous routing
- Require travel during unreasonable hours
- Excessively prolong travel or greatly increase the duration of the flight
- Result in increased costs that would offset transportation savings
- Be inadequate for the medical needs of the traveler.

If business class airfare is appropriate based on the University Policy stated in Air Travel: Permitted Expenses, then the cost in excess of the economy fare must be charged to an account other than a grant/contract.

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

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 30 days 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.
Definitions

**Domestic Travel:** Domestic travel is travel within and between any of the United States (including its territories and possessions).

**International Travel:** International Travel is travel outside of the United States (including its territories and possessions).

**Grant:** A grant is a university project where a person or organization, including the federal government, provided funds for the project. Certain conditions on the use of the provided funds, including travel, may apply.

Responsibilities

**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 be submitted to the Payroll and Disbursement department with 30 days of completion of the trip. Additionally:

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

Procedures

**Set up or Verify:** Create or Verify your Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) online database account. For assistance on creating your account or to access the online database please visit our [travel website](#).

**Estimate your travel expenses:** The travel authorization should include departure and return dates, conference costs, hotel accommodations, air travel or ground travel at a minimum. All other expenses should be noted as miscellaneous expenses.

**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.