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Item # 35

WEBB COUNTY



TRAVEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DRAFT 07/07/2021

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PENDING

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WEBB COUNTY TRAVEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. POLICIES

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of the Travel Policy is to establish appropriate requirements, limitations and guidelines for county travel and to ensure that travel's objective is for the County's benefit and related to the County Department's primary business activities.

This policy will provide the appropriate guidelines for County officials and employees requesting an advance or reimbursement for expenses incurred.

2.0 Authority

Upon Commissioner's Court adoption of this policy, the Purchasing Agent and County Auditor shall assist in ensuring departmental and employee compliance.

3.0 Scope

The travel policy applies to all Webb County officials and employees, hereinafter referred to as "traveler", who incur travel expenses advanced or reimbursed by the County; including grant funded travel, as applicable.

4.0 Budgetary Guidelines

- a) Sufficient funds must be available in the adjusted budget before an advance is requested and/or expenditure is made.
- b) Commissioner's Court expects that County officials will limit expenses to local and statewide training events and conferences that provide a benefit to countywide goals. They are encouraged to seek programs that would enable training to occur in Laredo/Webb County. Use of web, video and telephone conferencing along with hosting collaborations with other agencies should replace the need for travel to the extent possible.
- c) Conferences and training programs paid with County funds must involve subjects that address the requesting department's basic mission and be vital to County business. Focus should be on obtaining essential training opportunities at the least possible cost.
- d) Pre-registration and pre-paid activity that occurs for a conference/event scheduled for the upcoming fiscal year will be processed after Auditor's review of the department's proposed budget and will be charged to the new fiscal year upon budget activation.
- e) County departments should pay attention to the required due dates concerning issuance of the check and required Commissioners Court approval.

5.0 **Registration for Conference, Seminar, or Training**

Registration fees shall be paid in advance by the County using a purchase order (PO). A PO number is necessary before filling out and processing a travel advance form. If a PO is not secured prior to the travel date, then payment of the registration fees are the responsibility of the traveler attending the event and will be reimbursed upon return *together with all other travel arrangements*.

6.0 **Transportation**

The most cost efficient and cost effective mode of transportation should be selected. If the least expensive mode of transportation is not used, the County Official must provide to the County Auditor’s office written justification for the alternative used.

A. **Auto Rental**

- 1) Traveler is responsible for ensuring that a requisition is secured for vehicle rental reservations with the County’s approved vendor. The following options are available for vehicle rental:

Number of Passengers	Vehicle Type
1 – 2	Midsize or Standard Car/SUV
3	Full or Standard Car/SUV
4	Mini-Van / Full-Size SUV

- 2) A second vehicle is procured only in the event that five or more individuals are traveling.
- 3) Premium or luxury vehicles nor additional convenience packages at a cost are applicable for rental travel.
- 4) Drop-off of vehicle at destination city will be reviewed and approved on a case by case basis for determination of economy and benefit to the County.
- 5) When traveling in Texas, the vehicle will be covered under the County self-insurance plan.

B. **Use of Personal Vehicle for Travel or Business Purposes**

Out-of-County Travel

Use of a personal vehicle for out-of-county travel **is not allowed**. All out-of-county travel requires the use of an auto rental, as per Subsection A above.

C. Use of Personal Vehicle for Travel or Business Purposes

In-County Travel

- 1) When a traveler provides their own transportation, mileage shall be reimbursed at the federal GSA rate, which may be found at: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/transportation-airfare-rates-pov-rates-etc/privately-owned-vehicle-pov-mileage-reimbursement-rates>; unless an operational payroll allowance has already been provided to traveler.
- 2) If the traveler is only claiming mileage from use of a personal vehicle, the 'Mileage Claim Form' shall be completed and submitted with proper supporting documentation.
- 3) All mileage reimbursement requests must be accompanied by odometer readings, as prescribed by the County Auditor, or by an electronic mapping calculation. Additional mileage, for personal reasons, (site seeing, entertainment, etc.) is non-reimbursable.
- 4) If a traveler uses a personal vehicle for county business, the rules on the following table apply:

	From Your Home	From Your Primary Work Location	From a Temporary Work Location
To Your Home	No Mileage Allowed	No Mileage Allowed	Mileage Allowed
To Your Primary Work Location	No Mileage Allowed	No Mileage Allowed	Mileage Allowed
To Temporary Work Location	Mileage Allowed	Mileage Allowed	Mileage Allowed to a Second Temporary Location

Home Location - The place where you reside. Transportation expenses between your home and your primary work location are personal commuting expenses and are not reimbursed.

Primary Work Location - Your principal place of work.

Temporary Work Location - This is for personal vehicle miles driven going from home or one work location to another in the course of your business day, such as a business meeting, training or travel to the airport.

The County does not insure private vehicles so each traveler is responsible for determining whether their personal automobile insurance policy coverage is adequate. Damage to the vehicle, repairs, parking fines, towing charges and theft of property are the responsibility of the traveler, not the County.

D. Parking Fees, Toll, Fuel Costs & Other

- 1) A travel advance will be provided for self-parking at hotel, please ensure cost is billed to room. If the traveler selects valet parking, the County will only reimburse at the self-parking rate.
- 2) Valet Parking is reimbursed if it is the only parking option offered by the hotel/venue or the traveler provides a copy of their personal handicap placard.
- 3) Parking expenses related to a primary work location are considered a commuting expense and will not be reimbursed by the County.

D. Parking Fees, Toll, Fuel Costs & Other

(continued)

- 4) Parking fees related to meetings or training incurred for County-related business, not located at a primary work site within the County are reimbursable through Form AP02 "General Purpose Request for Payment" (GRP), with appropriate receipts. Likewise, parking charges for meetings and trainings held outside of the County with overnight travel should be included as part of the travel advance.
- 5) Toll road charges to and from a destination will be advanced only with proper supporting documentation denoting most efficient route of travel.
- 6) If applicable, only long-term not short-term airport parking will be reimbursable and require receipt.
- 7) At no time will the County be responsible for traffic and/or parking citations incurred by traveler.
- 8) Public transportation (buses, trolleys and shuttles) to and from event and for meals, when no car rental was made available, are reimbursable with receipts. Use of share ride electronic bikes, scooters and like transportation rentals (blue ducks, birds, lime, etc.) are not eligible for reimbursement.
- 9) Reasonable fuel expenses are reimbursable with original receipts.

E. Air Travel

- 1) Traveler is responsible for ensuring that a PO is secured for airfare reservations with the County's approved vendor before projected travel date. If airfare is purchased directly by employee, reimbursement for airfare will be processed through a General Purpose Request for Payment only after the employee's return from destination city and with a verifiable ticket number.
- 2) In order to ensure the best rates, reservations for air travel should be made as early as possible. Travelers are to obtain a flexible option ticket that reasonably meets business travel needs and should reserve seat at least 30 days in advance.
- 3) Coach class or economy tickets are procured through the County's Purchasing Department or their approved vendor. First-class tickets or tickets upgraded at a cost by traveler will not be paid nor reimbursed.
- 4) County is not responsible for non-required airline fees such as priority boarding and upgraded seat selection.
- 5) International flights require Commissioner's Court approval prior to requesting a Purchase Order for airfare reservations.
- 6) The County is not responsible for added costs incurred when a traveler changes their flight itinerary for personal reasons.
- 7) It is the responsibility of the traveler to verify flight departure changes. Airfare reservations canceled or no-showed by traveler will be the responsibility of traveler. For reservations processed through a PO and subsequently canceled/no-showed, the airline voucher amount issued in the traveler's name will be deducted from the traveler's next available paycheck; *traveler retains airline voucher rights.*

E. Air Travel

(continued)

If traveler rebooks air travel for an eligible training/conference event and uses their voucher, the traveler is applicable for reimbursement of previous payroll deduction up to the voucher amount minus any convenience/rebooking charges paid by the County. Convenience and rebooking fees are waived only for verifiable medical or funeral leave as contained in personnel policy. *Reimbursements for use of issued voucher are eligible for processing through a General Purpose Request for Payment only after the employee's return from destination city.*

- 8) The County will reimburse travelers up to \$50.00, each way, for airline baggage fees.
- 9) When traveling by air, hotel shuttle service is the preferred method of travel to the hotel. Round trip service is usually available at most airports to major hotels in the area. Please check with the hotel for service area, hours and associated costs when considering accommodations. If shuttle service is available only at a cost, please ensure cost is billed to room.
- 10) When complimentary shuttle service is not available to take traveler to and from hotel to conference/event center, use of Taxi/Uber/Lyft may be incurred. Receipts should be retained to document this ground travel expense including destination, company providing service, driver's name, date and time of travel.

7.0 Lodging

- 1) Traveler is responsible for ensuring timely hotel reservations. Reservations should be made at the most economical rate available (conference, member, government or best available) and should not exceed the lodging rates found on the GSA site at: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>
- 2) Lodging costs are for traveler only. If the traveler is accompanied by family or other individual(s) any additional travel charges are the personal responsibility of the traveler and will not be reimbursed.
- 3) The County will not pay or reimburse the traveler for additional lodging not considered a part of the business trip (i.e., personal trip or vacation). The County will not authorize travel expenses for travel not associated with a County purpose.
- 4) When traveling, the traveler should carry their County identification card as it may be required at check-in for verification of traveler's GSA rate applicability. Please note, the County is not exempt from hotel/motel taxes in Texas or elsewhere.
- 5) Original itemized receipts for lodging and associated taxes are required for reimbursement and must reflect the date for which the lodging was secured.
- 6) Sharing of rooms by travelers may be considered when reservations are being made.
- 7) If travel is for a seminar/conference and the hotel rates have been negotiated by the association to have a block of hotel space reserved, then the negotiated rate will be allowable. If the hotel is sold out, GSA rates will apply.

7.0 Lodging

(continued)

- 8) It is the responsibility of the traveler to cancel any room reservations that will not be used. A record of cancellation number should be kept. If a traveler fails to cancel a reservation in a timely fashion, he/she may be held responsible for any cancellation fees.

- 9) The following items are prohibited charges and will not be reimbursed, this is not an all-inclusive list and other items as determined to be for non-business use may be added as the need arises:

Sightseeing tours	Early check-in and late check-out fees
Movie charges	In-room meals or meals charged to room
Spas	Fees assessed for smoking in a non-smoking room
Health club	Alcoholic beverages
Room bars	Club memberships
Personal items	Laundry or Dry-Cleaning charges
Child care or kennel fees	Medication or doctor's visits
Rollaway beds	Entertainment expenses
Resort fees	

- 10) The following are acceptable charges that may be reimbursed, only when personal or County provided equipment is inoperable in the travel area and has been charged to hotel room.
 - ❖ Business related local and long distance telephone calls.
 - ❖ Internet connectivity charges for County-provided equipment necessary for emergency business use; *when free Wi-Fi is not made available by conference or hotel.* Supporting documentation regarding prior approval of charges must be obtained from department head.

8.0 Meal Reimbursement

Overnight Stay

Travel meals are advanced or reimbursed based on the following table:

	Departure Before	Arrival After	Texas	Out of State	Selected Cities**
Breakfast	7:30 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	\$10	\$12	\$16
Lunch	11:00 a.m.	1:00 p.m.	\$14	\$18	\$23
Dinner	6:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	\$16	\$20	\$26
Total			\$40	\$50	\$65

**District of Columbia, New York, Chicago, Seattle and San Francisco*

Separate amounts for breakfast, lunch, and dinner are listed below in order to deduct any meals provided by the conference/training facility. If your travel itinerary includes meals paid through a registration fee or hotel rate, those meals are not eligible for travel advance or reimbursement.

A meal purchased by the traveler for friends, family, other employees or officials are not reimbursable.

8.0 Meal Reimbursement

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Non-Overnight

When travel does not require an overnight stay, per diem payments are taxable and will be processed through payroll in accordance with 26 U.S. Code §162(a) (2). The IRS requires reimbursements for meals, during out-of-county travel, not requiring an overnight stay, to be recorded as income on the W2 of the traveler. These reimbursements will be paid through payroll and will have employment taxes withheld from their reimbursement. Use Form "WEBB COUNTY MEAL REIMBURSEMENT AND INCIDENTAL EXPENSE FORM" AP02 to request reimbursement for non-overnight travel.

9.0 Certificate of Completion and Travel Receipts

Certificate of completion for conference/training must be submitted along with all supporting travel receipts within five (5) days upon the completion of travel. If training personnel do not make certificates available immediately, please turn in name badge provided at training or copy of verifiable CPE form.

10.0 Supervision

Department Heads and Elected Officials communicate travel policy and procedures to their employees and are responsible for adherence to this policy and the procedural guidelines contained herein.

Department Heads shall manage the number of employees sent to any particular business travel event to ensure there are no impacts to the operation of department.

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B. TRAVEL ADVANCE PROCEDURES

1.0 Initial Process Request

Traveler and Department Head shall fill out and certify the "WEBB COUNTY PAYROLL ADVANCE IN ANTICIPATION OF A TRAVEL CLAIM" form **AP01** per traveler/trip. The purpose of this form is to gather basic information including but not limited to who is traveling, purpose of the travel, a breakdown of expected travel expenses including but not limited to lodging, meals and transportation and the dollar amount of the travel expenses advanced to traveler. Sufficient funds must be available in the adopted departmental budget before submitting form **AP01**.

Generate a New World Systems accounts payable invoice batch with details from the travel form. Attach completed travel form along with relevant travel and training documentation for appropriate departmental review and with sufficient time for Auditor's review and Commissioner's Court approval. Incomplete and/or late packets will not be accepted for review, unless authorized by the County Auditor.

Required backup documentation, copies of:

1. Training/conference event agenda
2. Training/conference registration purchase order
3. Hotel purchase order or confirmation email
4. Auto rental purchase order for dates of travel
5. Airfare purchase order

Upon return from travel, **traveler** is responsible for remitting hotel and all other expense receipts to the County Auditor's Office for reconciliation within (5) business days of the travel return date. ***Failure to do so will result in a reduction of traveler's next available paycheck equivalent to the travel advance.*** Additional details follow below in Section 3.0. *Travel Advance Reconciliation*. It is strongly encouraged that traveler maintain a copy of receipts for their records and provide originals to their department.

In the event that an advance is not approved *because of pending documentation or untimely submission*, the traveler may retroactively submit for travel expense reimbursement within five (5) business days of the travel return date. Travel expense reimbursement is based on travel policies contained herein and required backup documentation must be submitted along with original receipts.

2.0 Approval Process

The County Auditor's Office will review form the **AP01** package for compliance with this policy. Once approved by the County Auditor's Office the claim will be remitted within 30 days of travel to the Treasurer's Office for their review and submittal to the Commissioners Court for approval.

If the County Auditor's Office does not approve the request, notification and explanation of such will be emailed to the Official/Department Head.

3.0 Travel Advance Reconciliation

Receipts for all travel advances must be submitted to the County Auditor's Office within five (5) business days of return. Traveler must submit original receipts for airfare, baggage, lodging, registration, transportation, gas, parking and any other travel expenses advanced, as applicable, except for meal per diem. CPE Certificate or Certificate of Completion/Attendance must be submitted with applicable receipts, failure to do so will prohibit the approval of additional advances.

Upon Auditor's review of receipts the following determinations are made:

1. Travel Advance is closed out as no difference exists between advance and receipts submitted.
2. The traveler may be owed additional funds for items not included in the original travel advance.
3. The traveler may owe the County for unexpended funds.

Department's responsibility is as follows for each of the above determinations:

1. No further action is necessary.
2. Department and traveler will be provided via email with a copy of the original Travel Advance Request form indicating the area from where additional funds are due to traveler. Department shall submit a GRP through the New Worlds System for the processing of funds due to traveler. *Once GRP is routed through their department's levels of approval, no further action is necessary by department.*
3. Department and traveler will be provided via email with a copy of the original Travel Advance Request indicating the deficient area(s) and amount(s) due. The Auditor's Office will forward same to Payroll for deduction of the amount owed from the traveler's next available pay check. *Once payroll reimbursement is submitted by the Auditor's Office, no further action is necessary by department.*

AIRLINE TICKET PURCHASING PROCEDURE

Proposed

1. Traveler will provide their department's requisitioning coordinator with details regarding their proposed flight itinerary including conference agenda.
2. Requisition for Airline Ticketing vendor will be processed by department.
3. Once promoted by Auditor's, Purchasing's ticketing agent will procure appropriate itinerary through available *co-op/approved vendor*.
4. Purchase Order will be promoted once vendor provides airline ticket number(s) which will be added to PO's item description.
5. Ticketing agent will provide traveler and corresponding department contacts a notification regarding the promotion of PO and attachment of final itinerary to PO.

DEFINITIONS

County Official – Includes both Elected and Appointed positions as well as Department Heads. Incoming or newly elected officials are only eligible once they have received their certificate of election.

Destination City – Place, other than city/area located within Webb County wherein training, conference or meeting takes place.

Employees – Includes all persons who fill general order slots under the direction of County Officials, as approved by Commissioner's Court.

Flexible Option Ticket – Airline ticket that affords the traveler with a refund or voucher option should the traveler not be able to fulfill travel itinerary.

Traveler – County Official and Employees traveling on County business.