

Travel - Reimbursement

Effective: Moved to Policy Library from UPM 8.3(1)

Reviewed and Updated: January 1, 2025

Contact: [Controller's Department](#)

Introduction

This policy covers the reimbursement of university travel-related expenses.

Policy Statement

The university will reimburse the traveler for the reasonable costs of travel incurred on university business. This policy will apply to all colleges and units of the university. The policy will be consistently enforced across the enterprise and applies to travel paid from all university funding sources except the Ames Laboratory.

Expense Reports

Travel expense reports must be submitted within 120 days of the trip end date. T&H card charges that are not expensed within 120 days of purchase without prior authorization or approval from either Procurement Services or the Financial and Accounting Compliance Team may be subject to penalties. Expenses paid by personal card will not be reimbursed if more than 120 days from purchase.

Receipts are not required for allowable expenses less than \$75 on travel expense reports, except as otherwise required for special circumstances such as group meals. Receipts are required for all lodging expenses regardless of dollar amount. When conferences, meetings, or seminars are attended, travelers are required to submit an agenda, schedule, or similar documentation.

Discrepancies

If a Travel and Hospitality (T&H) card is used, the difference between the actual charges on the card and the allowed travel expenses would need to be reconciled on the travel expense report. If the traveler's T&H card charges exceeded the allowed travel expenses, discrepancies will be deducted from any personally paid reimbursable amounts. Any remaining balances will be charged to the traveler's U-bill.

Lodging – Domestic

Travel within the 50 United States plus Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands is considered domestic travel. All other travel is foreign. Registration with the Office of Risk Management is required for all foreign travel and travel to all U.S. territories. See Resources below for the International Travel Registration Policy.

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has established lodging per diem rates for domestic travel, excluding Hawaii, Alaska, and other U.S. territories and possessions, and these rates are subject to change monthly. A traveler may claim actual lodging expenses up to the per diem (plus any additional allowance approved by the Senior Vice President of Operations and Finance) for location, if lodging is required. Exceptions for lodging may be granted based on travel guidance developed by the Controller's office and appropriate documentation.

Meals and Incidentals – Both Domestic and Foreign Travel

Travelers will be reimbursed on a per diem basis for the meals and incidentals subject to limits as established by GSA (General Services Administration for domestic rates excluding the state of Iowa, the U.S. Department of Defense for Hawaii, Alaska and other US territories and possessions; and

the U.S. Department of State for foreign destinations) Per diem rates for travel within the state of Iowa will be established by Iowa State University. See the Summary of Allowable Expenses in the Resources, below. Meal reimbursements will also be subject to limitations based on travel days, time in travel status per day, and whether a meal was included in conference registration, paid as part of a group meal, or otherwise provided. Meal limitations for partial day travel were established by the Board of Regents as follows:

- Breakfast 20%
- Lunch 30%
- Dinner 50%

The traveler must be in travel status from 7:30 a.m. through 8:00 a.m. to claim breakfast, noon through 1:00 p.m. to claim lunch, and 5:30 p.m. through 6:30 p.m. to claim dinner. The traveler will be required to submit a conference agenda to assist in verification of the meals.

EXAMPLE:

Travel to Washington DC in February 2020 submitted for reimbursement <i>FY 2020 February Per Diem Rate for</i> <i>Washington DC per GSA:</i> <i>Lodging \$184.00</i> <i>Meals \$71.00</i> <i>Incidentals \$5.00</i>					
	Meals Per Diem	Lodging	Incidentals	Total Reimbursed	Comments
Day 1: Travel day left at 11 am no meals paid for by conference	\$56.80	\$184.00	\$5.00	\$245.80	\$71 meal per diem reduced by 20% since the traveler left after breakfast
Day 2: Conference paid for all three meals	\$0.00	\$184.00	\$5.00	\$189.00	\$71 meal per diem reduced by 100% due to conference meals
Day 3: Conference paid for Breakfast and Lunch	\$35.50	\$184.00	\$5.00	\$224.50	\$71 meal per diem reduced by 50% due to conference meals
Day 4: Conference ends at Noon only Breakfast provided. Arrived home at 4:00 pm	\$21.30	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$21.30	\$71 meal per diem reduced by 70% due to conference meals and travel ending before dinner
Total Reimbursed				\$680.60	

When the traveler is not in overnight travel status, meals reimbursed are required to be reported as taxable income, unless the primary purpose of the meal was to discuss university business with a client. The reimbursement documentation must explain that purpose.

Alcohol

Costs of alcohol cannot be reimbursed, except on Agency funds or General Support ISU Foundation funds.

Mileage

There are two mileage reimbursement rates: the default mileage rate and the higher mileage rate (IRS standard rate). For current rates, see the Summary of Allowable Travel Expenses in the Resources, below. Travelers can be reimbursed at the higher rate only if:

1. the round-trip is less than 100 miles;
2. the traveler is permanently based off-campus
3. the round-trip is 100 miles or more but the traveler was unable to reserve a vehicle from Transportation Services;
4. if the traveler is not an ISU employee or student; or
5. the round-trip is 100 miles or more to or from a designated airport (Omaha International Airport, Kansas City International Airport, or Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport) for the purpose of obtaining a lower-cost flight and combined airfare and mileage costs are less expensive than airfare and mileage costs from flying out of the Des Moines International Airport..

Personal expenses, such as repairs to a personal vehicle used for university travel, will be the sole responsibility of the traveler, even if damage occurred while on university business.

When a traveler chooses to drive rather than to fly, reimbursement will be the lower of actual driving costs or projected flying costs.

Comparison documentation must be provided to justify the decision to drive when mileage exceeds 400 miles one-way or 800 miles round trip. Driving costs to be considered include round trip default mileage rate, tolls, parking, and extra meals and hotel charges en route. Projected flying costs may include an airline ticket quote from a contracted travel agency, a \$25.00 service fee from the contracted travel agency, round trip mileage to the Des Moines airport at the higher mileage rate, estimated parking at the Des Moines airport, and either shuttle transportation or car rental.

Non-reimbursable

Expenses of a personal nature will be the sole responsibility of the traveler. Examples of personal expenses include, but are not limited to: childcare, pet boarding, in-room movies, and personal grooming.

Flight insurance will not be reimbursed, as coverage already exists for employees on university business when purchased through ISU's contracted agency.

Combining Personal and Business Travel

When personal and business travel are combined, expenses must be well documented and may not exceed the lowest available cost of travel on the direct or uninterrupted route. If the traveler uses an indirect route or interrupts travel by direct route for personal convenience, any additional expenses incurred will be the sole responsibility of the traveler. Additional costs incurred by spouses or family members will be the sole responsibility of the traveler.

No reimbursement can be made for a traveler staying at the residences of friends or relatives. Similarly, if a traveler stays with friends or relatives and then thanks them with gifts or meals, these expenses will be the sole responsibility of the traveler.

Resources

Links

- [Controller's Department Travel Information](#)
- [Summary of Allowable Expenses](#)
- [Unallowable Travel Expenses](#)
- [Contracted Travel Agencies](#)
- [FAQ – Lodging](#)
- [FAQ - Travel Advances](#)
- [Travel – Authorization and Funding](#)
- [Travel – Airfare](#)
- [Travel – Foreign](#)
- [Travel – Student Organizations](#)
- [Transportation Services](#)
- [International Travel Registration Policy](#)