



Travel Policies and Procedures Manual

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1. **Objective**

Official travel taken on behalf of the Children and Families Commission of Fresno County (“the Commission”) must be accomplished in a manner that meets business needs and minimizes the cost to the Commission, while also adhering to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) on government travel and guidelines of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA).

2. **Policy**

All official Commission travel shall be properly authorized, reported, and reimbursed in accordance with this document. Commission travelers are expected to exercise good judgment in the use of public funds. Personal travel is not to be charged to, or partially funded by, the Commission.

3. **Scope & Authority**

This policy applies to all official Commission travel, regardless of funding sources, and includes special rules for non-employees, and board members (Commissioners). These procedures apply to all employees and representatives, authorized to travel on Commission business. The Executive Director of the Commission or designee is authorized to issue interpretations and take other actions appropriate to implement provisions of these procedures.

4. **Definitions**

For the purposes of these procedures, the following definitions will apply:

A. Headquarters:

The place where the employee spends the largest portion of regular workdays or the place where the employee returns on completion of special assignments. For all employees, the headquarters will be the Commission office.

B. Residence:

A place of primary dwelling shall be designated for each employee. The primary dwelling shall be defined as the actual dwelling place of the employee.

C. Travel Expenses:

Expenses that are ordinary and necessary to accomplish official business purposes of a trip. Travel expenses include:

1. **Subsistence Expenses.**

Subsistence expenses include charges for meals, lodging and charges for personal expenses incurred while on travel status.

2. **Business Expenses:**

Business expenses consist of charges for business phone calls and communications, supply purchases and all other charges necessary to complete official business.

D. Employee:

Employees include full-time and part-time Commission employees.

E. Meal and Incidental Expense (M&IE):

M&IE and prorated M&IE are allowed when the traveler is on travel status for more than 12 hours in a 24-hour period. The M&IE amount is to cover the cost of meals and necessary incidental expenses including tips, laundry expenses, etc.

5. **Authorization to Travel**

- A. All official Commission travel must have prior approval. Out of state travel requests must be requested 60 days prior to the first day of travel and local travel requests must be requested 15 business days prior to travel date. In rare circumstances the Executive Director can waive the 60 or 15 day notice.
- B. All travel requests must be submitted using the Conference/Training Travel Request Form (the Form). The Form is used to request attendance for a conference or training and outline details of travel. The completed Form must be submitted to the designated staff to create a cost estimate. Once the cost estimate is complete, the Form is forwarded to the designee(s) responsible for budget monitoring to review and affirm that the estimate is within budget constraints. The Form is then forwarded for approval by the traveler's supervisor and final approval by the Executive Director or designee.
- C. Travel requests for the Executive Director will be approved by the Commission Chair.

6. **Payment of Travel (Travel Expense Claim Procedure)**

- A. Prepaid expenses for employees must be charged directly to the Commission whenever possible. These prepaid expenses are required to be documented in the Travel Expense Form upon completion of travel.
- B. Original, supporting receipts and the Form must be attached to Travel Expense Form and submitted to the designee responsible for budget monitoring within five working days of the date the expenses were incurred. The designated staff will complete a Travel Expense Form and submit to the traveler, who will then forward to their supervisor for approval. For final approval, the Executive Director or designee will review and sign off. Receipts submitted beyond the five days will not be reimbursed unless there are extraordinary circumstances that justify the late submission.
- C. All expense claims shall be properly itemized, accompanied by the original, supporting receipts and approved by the traveler's supervisor via signature. The supervisor approving the claim is responsible for determining the necessity and reasonableness of the travel claim and that adequate documentation is attached to support the claim. The Executive Director or designee may disallow unreasonable, unapproved, or excessive travel expenses claimed.
- D. No travel expense reimbursement shall be paid unless submitted on a Travel Expense Form.
- E. Travel expense claims from the Executive Director will be approved by the Commission Chair and reported at the next regular Commission meeting.

- F. In order to meet Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requirements, the Travel Expense Form must include:
1. The inclusive dates for each trip and the times of departure and return.
 2. The purpose or objective of each trip.
 3. The headquarters' address and the primary dwelling address.
 4. Certification that the travel expenses were incurred in accordance with Commission policies and on official business of the Commission. In the Conference/Training Travel Request Form, the traveler must explain how the training or conference supports their role within the Commission and how it aligns with the Commission's Strategic Plan.
 5. An itemized list of expenditures such as transportation, lodging and/or meals.
 6. The destination, location or area of travel. Use the name and address of each destination. General destinations such as "Fresno and vicinity" are not acceptable.
- G. In the case where receipts cannot be obtained or have been lost, a statement, in memoranda form, to that effect should be made and attached to the Travel Expense Form.
- H. Travel advances must be noted and deducted from subsequent reimbursements. (See section 11 regarding travel advances.)
- I. Reimbursable expenses, as outlined in this Policy, are offered to Commission employees. If an employee chooses to forgo the offered travel accommodations, (rental car, room arrangements, etc.) the Commission is not responsible to cover the expenses.

7. Per diem subsistence allowance

In computing the per diem subsistence allowance for authorized travel lasting more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period, the following maximum reimbursements will be allowed for expenses incurred out of county:

- A. *Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE)*: The following table shows the general breakdown of breakfast, lunch, and dinner components of the maximum *daily* reimbursement (per diem) rates for meals and incidental expenses while on travel status. **The M&IE rates differ by travel location, departure and actual return time. View the [per diem rate](#) of your primary destination in order to determine which M&IE rates applies.** Refer to the current fiscal year Domestic Per Diem Rates issued by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Department for guidance on deducting these amounts from per diem reimbursement claims.

The appropriate M&IE for a day is the rate prescribed for the community in which the traveler is receiving the training or conference. On the day of return, a traveler is entitled to the M&IE applicable for the preceding day. On the day of departure and return, the traveler receives a prorated M&IE based upon scheduled departure and actual return times as follows:

Day of Departure			
Departure Time	Before 9:00 AM	Before 2:00 PM	Before 11:00 PM
M&IE	Full Day	Lunch & Dinner	Dinner

Day of Return			
Return Time	12:00 PM (Noon)	Before 5:00 PM	After 5:01 PM
M&IE	Breakfast	Breakfast & Lunch	Full Day

In circumstances where the traveler is required by the airline to report to the terminal more than two hours prior to departure, the traveler is to state on the travel expense claim the additional time required by the airline and the traveler's actual check in time. This additional time (beyond two hours) is added to the departure time in the above table to allow the traveler an M&IE as may be appropriate. For example, if the airline required the traveler to report three hours before flight time, the "Before 9:00 AM" departure time would be adjusted to "Before 10:00 AM."

- B. *Meals provided to travelers:* Occasionally, a traveler is provided with a meal while at a conference, training seminar, etc., or as part of a lodging package. When a traveler is provided with a meal in these or similar circumstances, the traveler is not eligible for the related M&IE allowance.

8. Transportation Expenses

Travelers are responsible to coordinate transportation arrangements with the designated staff responsible. Travelers are expected to make every effort to obtain the most economical rates, use the most economical mode of transportation, and use the most usually traveled route consistent with the purpose of the trip.

Transportation expenses consist of the charges for commercial airline fares; vehicle rental; private car mileage allowances; overnight and day parking for cars; bridge and road tolls; taxi, bus, streetcar, train, rideshare, micro-mobility transportation, rapid transit fares; and all other charges essential to the transport to and from the Commission's official headquarters. Reimbursement will be made only for the approved method of transportation that is in the best interest of the Commission, considering both the direct expense as well as the traveler's time.

A. Transportation by Automobile

Reasonable charges for necessary parking, as well as charges for ferries, bridges, tunnels, or toll roads while on official travel or away from regular duties, may be claimed. Travelers must submit proof of liability coverage for use of their privately-owned automobile use for business prior to the date of travel. Minimum prescribed liability insurance coverage under this policy is:

- \$15,000 for personal injury to, or death of, one person
- \$30,000 for injury to, or death of, two or more persons in one accident
- \$5,000 for property damage

1. *Privately Owned Automobiles:* Employees are required to conform to public policy regarding fiscal responsibility. Travelers will utilize their privately-owned automobile if this mode of travel is deemed as the most reasonable.
2. *Mileage Reimbursement:* Mileage reimbursement is intended to cover the cost of routine repairs, tires, gasoline, and other automobile expense items due to use for Commission business. Travelers will be reimbursed, via the Mileage Reimbursement Form, the maximum current rate that is approved by the IRS for use of their privately-owned vehicle. Mileage shall ordinarily be computed between the traveler's workstation and the common destination or airline terminal. Expense claims between the traveler's residence and the Commission's headquarters will not be allowed. However, mileage expenses shall be allowed between the traveler's residence and/or headquarters whichever is less to the destination or common airline terminal, if business travel for the Commission originates or terminates during a regularly scheduled day off. When a traveler is authorized to drive a private vehicle to or from a common airline terminal, mileage may be reimbursed as follows:
 - One round trip, including parking for the duration of the trip; or
 - Two round trips, including short-term parking expenses, when an employee is driven to the airport or picked-up from the airport.
3. *Auto Allowance:* At the discretion of the board members (Commissioners), the Executive Director may receive auto allowance for usage of his or her private vehicle and out-of-pocket travel expenses for activities performed in representing the Commission. Auto Allowance will be paid via payroll services and is offered in lieu of mileage reimbursement, etc. As detailed in this policy, liability coverage requirements apply.
4. *Vehicle Rental:* Vehicle rentals may be used when, in a specific situation, it's considered more advantageous to the Commission than the use of taxis or other means of transportation. Travelers are responsible to coordinate travel arrangements with the designated staff responsible. Commission Staff is responsible for obtaining the best available rate through corporate accounts that meets the requirements of the trip. Vehicle rental costs will be billed directly to the Commission whenever possible. Reimbursement for actual and necessary costs of fuel will be made to the traveler. No reimbursement will be made if a traveler authorizes non-staff drivers without prior approval of the Executive Director or designee.
 - Receipts are required to be submitted for vehicle rental fuel.
 - A cost-efficient economy or compact rental car shall be the category used by travelers. Further justification will be required for larger vehicles.

B. Transportation by Aircraft

Travelers are responsible to coordinate travel arrangements with the designated staff responsible to obtain the best possible rate. Tickets and associated booking fees will be purchased and paid

in advance by the Commission. When it is necessary for the traveler to coordinate their own travel (except as described in section 1 below), they will be reimbursed for the ticket price and associated fees for use of a commercial airline so long as the travel is for Commission business.

1. *Indirect or Interrupted Itineraries.* Travelers are responsible for any additional expenses resulting from the use of an indirect route or stops along the way for personal reasons. Reimbursement is limited to the actual costs incurred or to the costs that would have been incurred using the normally traveled route and dates, whichever is less. Any excess of personal travel time will be charged to the traveler's accrued Paid Time Off hours. Travelers are responsible to ensure early arrival to the air terminal for the purpose of completing processes required for travel by aircraft (check-in, security screening, etc.). If a flight is missed as a result of the traveler's oversight, the traveler will bear responsibility for any additional costs.
2. *Use of Ground Transportation in Lieu of Air Travel.* A traveler may choose to use ground transportation, for personal reasons even if air travel is the appropriate mode of transportation. In that case, reimbursement may not exceed the amount for airfare the Commission would have paid if air travel had been used, plus the normal cost of ground transportation to and from airports. The cost of meals, lodging, tolls, ferries, and parking while in transit via ground transportation may be reimbursed if the total amount reimbursed does not exceed the cost of airfare that would have been paid plus cost of potential ground transportation to and from at the air terminal.
3. *Extended Travel to Save Costs.* Additional expenses associated with extended travel in order to save costs (e.g., Saturday night stay for domestic travel), may be reimbursed when the cost of airfare would be less than that of the cost of airfare had the traveler not extended the trip. Such expenses, which include lodging, car rental, and M&IE, shall not exceed the amount the Commission would have paid, had the traveler not extended the trip.

C. No reimbursement will be made for the following transportation expenses:

- Expenses arising from travel between the traveler's residence and Commission headquarters
- Personal travel to and from hotel lodging (i.e. shopping, restaurants, etc.)
- Traffic/parking tickets or fines
- Expenses for spouses/family/friends traveling with the traveler
- First class airfares and/or seat upgrades
- Motorcycle transportation costs

9. **Lodging Expenses**

Travelers are responsible for coordinating lodging arrangements with the designated staff responsible. Lodging rates should be comparable to those arising from the use of good, moderately priced establishments catering to the general public. Reasonable lodging expenses supported by a receipt are reimbursable. Actual lodging expenses will be allowed when documented by an itemized receipt that indicates how the expense was paid. Credit card receipts are not acceptable as many charges could be included that are not reimbursable lodging expenses.

- A. An incidental allowance of \$5.00 per day may be claimed for each complete 24-hour period while on travel status. This allowance is designed to cover incidental expenses including, but not limited to laundry, dry cleaning, personal phone calls, and fees and tips for waiters and baggage handlers. Receipts are not required for incidentals. It is not designed to include cab fares and business telephone calls for which reimbursement may be claimed. Details regarding incidentals should be defaulted to guidelines on the [GSA website](#).
- B. Business related meals must follow the Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (“the Accounting Policies”) and cannot be claimed on the Travel Expense Claim Form. If permissible per the Accounting Policies, a Payment Authorization Form must be used for this type of claim.
- C. No reimbursement will be made for valet services or liquor/bar bills.

10. **Miscellaneous Travel Expenses**

Miscellaneous travel expenses are reimbursable when they are ordinary and necessary to accomplish the official business purpose of a trip. The Travel Expense Form must include an explanation of why such expenditures are being claimed and at minimum have verbal pre-authorization from the traveler’s supervisor and/or the Executive Director or designee.

Allowable miscellaneous expenses include the following: Business office expenses such as word processing services; equipment rentals; fax and computer expenses; copy services; overnight delivery/postage; purchase of materials and supplies (when normal purchasing procedures cannot be followed); internet charges; books, supplies, and materials that pertain to the Commission’s mission.

11. **Travel Advances**

A Payment Authorization Form and written request must be completed and approved by the traveler’s supervisor and the Executive Director or designee for an advance on travel expenses. The completed Form and documentation must be submitted no later than 10 days prior to the travel/training. Cash advances will be issued within 10 days of when an expense is to be paid or incurred in order to satisfy IRS regulations. The amount requested shall not exceed seventy-five percent (75%) of the reasonably estimated out-of-pocket expenses needed for the trip.

Travel advances issued must be deducted when the Travel Expense Form is submitted for the concluded trip. Travel advances in excess of itemized expenses must be repaid by the traveler to the Commission within 30 days from the end of the trip. No new travel advances or expense reimbursements will be issued to an individual who has an outstanding travel advance repayment more than 30 days old. The travel advance must be repaid to the Commission immediately when a trip is cancelled or postponed.

Since a traveler should have only one outstanding cash advance at a time each advance should be accounted for before another advance is granted. The traveler must submit a Travel Expense Form even if he or she is not owed any additional reimbursement, in order to document the business purpose for which the advance was issued and the final expense amount of the trip.

12. **Commissioners**

Except for those specifically covered in statute, each day that a Commissioner is in travel status for business of the Commission, the member is entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses to the same extent, in the same manner, and under the same conditions as provided to employees.

Commissioners are also entitled to receive reimbursement for attending monthly meetings and/or special events on behalf of the Commission as outlined in this policy.

13. **Travel Expenses for Non-Employees**

The Commission will reimburse non-employees, for business related travel and expenses made on behalf of the Commission. Prior written approval from the Executive Director is required.

Non-employees traveling or incurring business related expenses for the Commission are required to comply with this policy. Reimbursement will be issued in accordance with the procedures outlined above. Travel expenses properly substantiated, documented and reported on the Travel Expense Form will not be reported by the Commission to the IRS as income. A non-employee's signature is not required on the Travel Expense Form provided some accompanying correspondence or email is attached outlining the expenses that have been incurred and requesting reimbursement. A signed W-9 form should be attached if the person is a U.S. citizen and is being paid by the Commission for the first time. Amounts exceeding the substantiated business expenses that are not accounted for within a reasonable period of time, are reportable to the IRS on Form 1099.

14. **Commission Travel Claim Review Responsibilities**

Prior to reimbursement for business related travel and expenses, the Commission's staff responsible for operations will review all travel claims in order to:

- Ensure compliance with the Commission's and all other appropriate policies
- Ensure that per diem rates are adhered to
- Ensure that supporting documentation matches the travel claim request
- Ensure that all claims have been properly approved with an original signature
- Ensure that all travel advances are timely and properly deducted or reimbursed by/to the Commission

Failure to comply with this policy will result in follow up with the traveler which may cause a delay in processing the reimbursement. An attempt will be made to communicate any discrepancies to the traveler and/or the travel claim will be returned to the claimant for completion. If discrepancies cannot be resolved, it may result in discipline.