



Travel Procedures Manual

Revised – October 1, 2022

For additional information and forms, please visit the [Travel website](#).

For questions, please contact the Travel Office via email at ChromeRiver@email.wcu.edu or call ext. 7203.

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1.1 Introduction and Scope

1.2 State Policies Regarding Travel: The University's Travel Policies and Procedures Manual is based on Section 5 of The State Budget Manual, which sets forth travel policies and regulations regarding securing authorization and reimbursement for official state travel expenditures.

The policies and procedures set forth in this manual applies to all Western Carolina University faculty, staff, students, and other individuals who travel on behalf of the University. Before travel expenditures are incurred, all travelers and administrative personnel should be aware of the travel policies and procedures stated in this manual.

1.3 Responsibility of Traveler: All travelers traveling on official state business representing WCU are expected to utilize the most cost-effective and efficient method of travel. An employee traveling on official business is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations and services that are unnecessary, unjustified, or for the convenience or personal preference of the employee in the performance of official state business are prohibited. Employees will be responsible for unauthorized costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience. Each traveler is responsible for their expenses (both employees and non-employees). The University should not be billed for an individual's travel-related expenses.

Receipts are required for all travel expenses, except when claiming per diem for meals and mileage.

Candidates are responsible for all expenses initially and then are required to provide itemized receipts for reimbursement. Candidates can only be reimbursed for a maximum of three-day/two-night visits. State funds may not be used to reimburse a candidate from within The University System.

State travel guidelines apply to all funds. State guidelines shall take precedence over federal guidelines governing the use of federal grant funds.

1.4 Responsibility of Traveler's Supervisor: Approval authorization for travel is delegated to the traveler's supervisor. This individual's approval indicates that appropriate review of the cash advance/reimbursement has been made, and the travel conforms to all rules and regulations and is properly supported with valid documentation and receipts.

1.5 Official State Business: These policies are intended to apply only to those state employees or other persons on official state business. Official state business occurs when the State employee or other person is traveling to attend approved job-related training, work on behalf of, officially represent, or provide a state service upon the State's request. Travel that would not directly benefit the State will not be reimbursable.

Travel guidelines apply to all employees, non-employees, students, or guests traveling on university official state business.

1.6 Timely Submission: Travel reimbursement requests should be submitted in Chrome River within 30 days of returning from your trip. All travel expenses should be itemized by expense type and date.

Only expenses reimbursable prior to travel are Airfare and Registration fees. All other expenses are post-travel.

2.0 Chrome River

All university travel is processed through Chrome River. Access Chrome River through travel.wcu.edu or MyWCU>Travel Authorizations>Login to Chrome River. Check Requests should not be used for travel reimbursements.

If you need access to Chrome River or schedule a training, please contact Anita Hall at sahall@email.wcu.edu or ext. 3031. Access will not be granted until training has been completed.

Create and submit a pre-approval in Chrome River, including all possible estimated expenses. All backup documentation should be attached to the pre-approval to provide proof of necessary travel. Travel without a pre-approval is against the Chrome River policy.

[Blanket Travel](#) forms may be used for repetitive trips only (mileage).

Travel Reimbursements will be mailed to the address set up as the "Default AP Address" in Banner. To change your address, please complete the [Chrome River Request](#) form on the controller's website. Direct deposit for employees can be set up for reimbursements by completing the [Direct Deposit Enrollment](#) form and returning to Human Resources for processing.

3.0 Travel Card

The State has authorized the use of state-issued credit cards (T-cards) for employees during travel on official state business.

These cards are distributed at the discretion of the department head, purchasing department, and travel auditor.

Employees will be responsible for unauthorized costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience. [\(NC OSBM Budget Manual Policy 5.0.2\)](#)

Employee misuse of state-issued credit cards is grounds for termination. [\(NC OSBM Budget Manual Policy 5.1.2\)](#)

Faculty and Staff who are interested in the University Travel Card should contact the Travel Auditor by email at tcard@email.wcu.edu or call ext. 7203. The [Travel Card Application](#) can be found on the [Purchasing Department's](#) website.

4.0 Travel Status

In-state travel status begins when the employee leaves their duty station or home, whichever is closer to the destination, until they return. "Duty station" is defined as the location where the employee is assigned. The designation of an employee's home as the duty station requires the agency head's approval.

Travelers must travel 70 miles round-trip to be reimbursed for lodging or meals.

Out-of-state travel status begins when the employee leaves the state and remains in effect until the employee returns to the state.

All international travel must be pre-approved by the Vice-Chancellor in the Provost's office. [\(University Policy 100\)](#) International travel status begins when the employee leaves the country and remains in effect until the employee returns to the country.

5.0 Travel Advances

Permanent full-time employees traveling on state business who have not been issued state credit cards (T-cards), may be issued travel advances. This must be authorized by the travel office, and department head or designee. Travel advances will not be issued to non-state employees or students. [\(NC OSBM Budget Manual Policy 5.1.3\)](#)

Travel Advances are allowed for Athletic Team Travel and Athletic Recruiting.

Travel Advance requests must be submitted in Chrome River and routed to the travel auditor for approval at least two weeks prior to the trip.

Travel Advance checks will be mailed or processed by direct deposit.

Travel Advances will not be issued in June due to the year-end close.

Questions about Travel Advances should be directed to the Travel Auditor at chromeriver@email.wcu.edu.

6.0 Meals

6.1 Per Diem Meal Rates: When a state employee is on official state business and is in overnight travel status, the employee may be reimbursed for meals. Per diem is only reimbursed at the current state per diem rates.

Departments may reimburse students/non-employees/employees at a per diem amount lower than state rates but not over the state per diem amounts.

Departure and arrival times along with each meal's reimbursement rate, must be listed on the reimbursement request.

6.2 Meals During Overnight Travel: Employees receive allowances for meals and lodging for full days of travel. Employees may also be reimbursed for meals for partial days of travel when in overnight travel status. The partial day may be the day of departure or the day of return, but the travel must involve a travel destination located at least 35 miles from the employee's regularly assigned duty station or home, whichever is less.

Other qualified travelers are also eligible for allowances/subsistence rates when using hotel and meal facilities located in North Carolina.

6.3 Meal During Daily Travel: To comply with IRS regulations, breakfast and dinner meals are no longer reimbursable for travel that does not involve an overnight stay. Lunch always has not been reimbursable for travel that does not include an overnight stay.

University employees may not be reimbursed for meals in conjunction with a congress, conference, assembly, convocation, or meeting, by whatever name called, of the employees within the University or between employees of the University and other state departments, institutions, or agencies to discuss issues relating to the employee's normal day-to-day business activities.

Details related to current **Meal and Lodging rates**, are listed below.

Description	In-State	Out-of-State Out-of-Country	Comment
Breakfast (Departure prior to 6:00am, Return after 10:00am)	\$10.10	\$10.10	Must extend the workday 2 hours
Lunch (Depart prior to 12:00pm, Return after 2:00pm)	\$13.30	\$13.30	Cannot be claimed unless the trip requires an overnight stay, or the cost is part of a registration fee
Dinner (Depart prior to 5:00pm, Return after 8:00pm)	\$23.10	\$26.30	Must extend the workday by 3 hours

7.0 Lodging

The agency head or designee's prior approval must be obtained to qualify for reimbursement for overnight stays. Overnight lodging may only be authorized and paid to support business needs.

Each employee is responsible for their own request for reimbursement. Specific lodging dates must be listed on the reimbursement request, substantiated by a receipt from a commercial lodging establishment.

No housekeeping tips, food/restaurant charges, vending charges, or laundry/dry cleaning services will be reimbursed.

The following details must be provided regarding lodging:

- The name & address of the seller or supplier
- Receipt for proof of payment. Must include:
 - Room charge
 - Length of stay
 - Taxes and fees
 - Name on card (cardholder must match the name on the reimbursement)
 - Last 4 digits of card number
 - Date of transaction
 - Balance paid in full

Details related to current [Meal and Lodging rates](#), are listed below.

Description	In-State	Out-of-State Out-of-Country
Lodging	\$89.10	\$105.20
Lodging over 200% requires approval from the Vice Chancellor	\$178.20	\$210.40

7.1 Excess Lodging: Excess lodging authorization for in-state, out-of-state, and international travel must be obtained in advance from the agency head or their designee. Lodging totaling more than 200% of the allowable rate, will require approval from the Vice-Chancellor.

Excess lodging is allowed for the following reasons:

- Employee is in a high-cost area, and the current allowance is insufficient to secure lodging.
- Cost of the excess lodging is less than the cost of lower-cost lodging plus transportation.
- Employee or agency deems that lower-cost lodging would put the employee at risk for safety or security.
- Excess lodging authorization is **not** allowed for the convenience or personal preference of the employee.

7.2 Third-Party Lodging (Expedia, Travelocity): Before booking, all third-party lodging requests must be pre-approved by the controller or the travel auditor. An itemized rental agreement must be submitted along with three hotel comparisons.

Travelers should not book third-party lodging for personal convenience.

Third-party lodging cannot be charged on a T-card.

7.3 Rental for Lodging (Airbnb): Travelers must provide at least three hotel comparisons to show the projected cost-savings to the University compared to standard lodging rates; otherwise, Airbnb or rental for lodging will not be reimbursed.

- The following details must be provided regarding the stay arrangement.
- The name & address of the seller or supplier
- Signed rental agreement or reservation confirmation

Receipt for proof of payment. Must include:

- Name on card (cardholder must match the name on the reimbursement)
- Last 4 digits of card number
- Date of transaction
- Balance paid in full
- The amount to be charged (price breakdown)
- The number of travelers
- The length of stay
- Contact information

7.4 Room Sharing: If employees are splitting the cost of the room, the traveler bearing the expense should include the complete lodging expense on their reimbursement request. It will be up to that individual to reimburse other occupants who shared the room.

7.5 Attendants: Payment of travel and subsistence expenses (hotel and meal costs) of attendants for handicapped employees while traveling on official University business may be reimbursed to the same extent as university employees if advance approval is obtained from the appropriate vice chancellor in accordance with these policies and procedures.

8.0 Transportation

8.1 Ride Sharing: The University's policy is to limit the number of vehicles for which mileage expense is to be incurred. Travelers should utilize the minimum number of vehicles necessary to transport multiple business travelers to a common destination with reasonable regard for safety, comfort, and efficiency. WCU employees should always use the lowest cost option for ground transportation.

The precise number of vehicles that can be justified will vary according to the type of vehicle available (e.g., van, sedan, station wagon); the number of travelers; distance to be traveled; vicinity travel required at the destination; compatibility of travelers' departure and return schedules; and other pertinent variables. However, both the traveler and those who authorize the travel bear responsibility for assuring that the number of vehicles used, and the consequent expenses incurred reflect observance of the University policy stated above.

Only one individual may claim mileage reimbursement when multiple passengers undertake approved business travel in a private vehicle.

8.2 Ground Transportation: State employees shall conduct most efficiently and at the lowest, most reasonable cost to the State by utilizing the following options:

- Use state-owned, motor pool vehicles when available.
- Use state contracts for short-term rentals.
- Limit reimbursements of personal vehicles.

8.3 Car Rental: Rental vehicles may be used with the prior approval of the agency head or their designee. State Contract approves Enterprise and National Car Rental.

Unless prior approval has been obtained from the Vice-Chancellor or their designee, the state employee shall bear the difference in cost when renting a vehicle from a class that exceeds the cost of a standard vehicle on the State's term contract for short-term vehicle rentals.

Rental cars are not authorized for personal use or to be used at state expense solely for the convenience or personal preference of the employee.

No optional extras, insurance, extra driver, roadside assistance, navigation, or car seat charges will be reimbursed.

Rental insurance reimbursement is only allowable when pre-approval from the Vice-Chancellor is obtained and is in conjunction with international travel.

The following details must be provided regarding the vehicle rental.

- Proof of payment. Must include:
 - The name & address of the seller or supplier
 - Name on card (cardholder must match the name on the reimbursement)
 - Last 4 digits of card number
 - Date of transaction
 - Balance paid in full

8.4 Mileage: Mileage is measured from the duty station or point of departure, whichever is closer to the destination. When using a personal vehicle for state business, mileage will be reimbursed at the Current Mileage Rate.

A maximum of two round trips with no parking charges or one round trip with parking charges are reimbursable at the current state rate.

8.5 Commuting: When personal vehicles are used on official state business, mileage is measured from the closer of the duty station or point of departure to the destination.

Reimbursement shall not be made for using a personal vehicle in commuting from an employee's home to his duty station. Mileage reimbursement is not allowed to employees on "call back" status. For the State's policy on compensation to employees on "call back" status, see the State Personnel Manual.

8.6 Vehicle Fuel: Gas receipts are an allowable expense when a rental vehicle is used for official state business. Gas receipts are not to be used in lieu of mileage and on rare occasions can be reimbursed with prior approval from the Travel Office.

The following details must be provided regarding gas receipts:

- Proof of payment. Must include:
 - Date of transaction
 - Number of gallons purchased
 - Total amount paid

University vehicles have a state gas card available for use.

8.7 Parking, Tolls, Fees, and Fines: Parking fees, tolls, and storage fees are reimbursable while conducting official state business if such expenses are determined reasonable and clearly show that there was care taken to keep the costs to the State as low as possible. Receipts are required for reimbursement of these expenses. Valet Parking is non-reimbursable if self-parking is available.

Fines for traffic and parking violations are the responsibility of the state employee.

8.8 Uber/Taxi/Shuttle: Reimbursement for travel to and from the airline terminal (or train/bus station if applicable), car rental service, duty station/home (whichever is less) may be utilized via the most economical mode available

The fares are reimbursable to the traveler when required for transportation on official state business. Please provide a receipt that shows the fare charge, taxes, and fees.

The following details must be provided regarding fare transportation.

- Proof of payment. Must include:
- The name & address of the seller or supplier
- Date of transaction
- Total amount paid
- Taxes and fees
- Tips (if requesting reimbursement)
 - Parking/Auto Related: Valets - \$2.00 per car when collecting the car Taxi or car service drivers - no more than \$5.00 per trip.
 - Baggage - no more than \$2.00 per bag
 - Shuttle Drivers -no more than \$2.00 per bag.

Bus and Train Service Reimbursement limited to economy fares, and an itemized receipt is required.

8.9 Public Transportation: In lieu of a taxi or airport shuttle, public transportation is reimbursable up to \$5.00 for each one-way trip from the airport to the hotel/meeting or from the hotel/meeting to the airport. The actual cost of the travel is reimbursable with the submission of an itemized receipt.

8.10 Airfare:

Basic Economy/Coach airfare, taxes and fees are reimbursable. **No extras, upgrades, optional add-ons, or travel protection will be reimbursed.**

Examples include but are not limited to TSA Pre-check, Price Match, In-Air Internet, Early Bird, Early Boarding, Seat Assignment, Seat Upgrades, etc.

The following details must be provided regarding airfare.

- Proof of payment. Must include:
 - The name & address of the seller or supplier
 - Form of payment
 - Date of transaction
 - Travel Dates
 - Seat assignment, type and class
 - Traveler Name
 - Fare breakdown & cost
 - Taxes and fees

Airfare can be reimbursed prior to travel with an itemized receipt.

8.11 Baggage: Baggage fees are reimbursable to the traveler with a receipt. Travelers are encouraged to keep baggage fees to a minimum by traveling within the standard guidelines used by airlines. Excessive baggage fees that are considered personal preference will not be reimbursed.

The following details must be provided regarding baggage fees.

- Proof of payment. Must include:
 - The name & address of the seller or supplier
 - Date of transaction
 - Total amount paid

9.0 Cancellation, Penalties and Charges

Penalties and charges resulting from the cancellation of travel reservations (including airline, hotel, other travel reservations and conference registrations) shall be the agency's obligation if the employee's travel has been approved in advance and the cancellation or change is made at the direction of and/or for the convenience of the agency.

If the cancellation or change is made for the employee's personal benefit, it shall be the employee's obligation to pay the penalties and charges.

However, the agency may pay the penalties and charges in the event of accidents, serious illness, death within the employee's immediate family, or other critical circumstances beyond the employee's control. The travel Auditor may request additional information to determine if the charges are reimbursable.

10.0 Registrations

State law allows reimbursement of the actual amount of conference registration fees when substantiated by a valid itemized receipt or invoice.

Registration fees may not include meals or optional add-on costs for social entertainment, alcoholic beverages, setups, flowers, or promotional (gift) items.

The following details must be provided regarding registration.

- Proof of payment. Must include:
 - The name & address of the seller or supplier
 - Date of conference/meeting
 - Name on card (cardholder must match the name on the reimbursement)
 - Last 4 digits of card number
 - Date of transaction
 - Balance paid in full

Registration can be reimbursed prior to attending the conference with an itemized receipt.

Registration payable to a third-party vendor is processed on a check request or contact the Purchasing Department about using a P-card.

11.0 Conferences

11.1 Internal Conferences: Internal conferences involve the attendance of employees within the University only. A routine staff meeting is not an internal conference.

11.1a Requirements and Limitations are as follows:

- Payment for meals is not allowable unless overnight travel criteria are met
- The conference is planned in advance, with a formal agenda or curriculum.
- There is a written invitation to participants, setting forth the calendar of events and the detailed schedule of costs.
- Excess travel subsistence may not be granted for internal departmental meetings, conferences, seminars, etc.
- Such meetings must be held in state facilities when available.
- Registration fees may not be charged.
- Refreshments for "coffee breaks" can be provided if there are twenty or more participants and the costs do not exceed \$5.00 per participant, per day.
- A University department cannot use State funds to support or underwrite a rally, celebration, reception, employee appreciation activity, or similar function, by whatever name called, that promotes any cause or purpose other than the mission and objective of the University.

11.2 External Conferences: External conferences involve the attendance of persons other than employees of the University.

11.2 a Requirements and Limitations are as follows:

- Payment for meals is allowable if included in the registration fee.
 - Still, such a fee must not consist exclusively of meal cost, or it will not be allowable unless meeting overnight travel criteria.

11.3 Exceptions Regarding Conference Meals: According to G.S. 138-6(a)(3), a university or State agency cannot use funds to pay for conference meals for state employees at which a conference fee was not charged unless the following conditions are met:

- Federal grants, other grants, State, or institutional trust funds as defined in G.S. 116-36.1) may be used for meals if the conditions attached to those funds allow for the provision of meals for a conference.
- The University must have documentation of the conditions. If this is the case, meals may be provided to university employees even if a registration fee was not charged.
- The employee may not request reimbursement for the meal.

12.0 International Travel

A pre-approval is required to be approved before booking any international travel expenses. Prior to travel the provost's office must approve the Policy 100 form, travel arrangement fees, and service charges. International travel should always be pre-approved by the department head, VC, travel auditor, and controller.

International travel groups are encouraged to book all travel through a travel agency. With sufficient justification and documentation, state employees can be reimbursed for usual, reasonable fees and service charges imposed by travel agents or third-party travel sites for assistance in making travel arrangements. Prior approval is required from the travel office.

To be reimbursed for expenses, not in USD currency, you will be required to use the Chrome River conversion. Information must be in English, or the department must provide a translation along with the receipt plus the currency conversion amount.

12.1 Passports: Reimbursement for costs incurred in obtaining or renewing a passport may be made to an employee who, in the regular course of his duties, is required to travel overseas in the furtherance of official state business. Passport expenses are chargeable to the same fund that supports the employee's trip. Itemized receipt(s) are required for reimbursement.

Prior approval is required to validate passport is needed for business travel only, not personal travel.

13.0 Political Travel

Official state business occurs when the state employee or other person is traveling to attend approved job-related training, work on behalf of, or officially represent the State. Determining whether the travel was political in nature is the responsibility of the Vice Chancellor.

Travel that does not directly benefit the State will not be reimbursable.

No state funds may be used to pay for travel for a state official while attending a political function, meeting, or any political activity. Political activity is directed toward securing the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, partisan political group, or issue in a partisan election.

14.0 Non-State Employees Travel

Non-state employees traveling on official state business whose expenses are paid by the University are subject to these policies and procedures, including statutory subsistence allowances, to the same extent as university employees.

No travel advances will be made to nonstate employees. Travel expenses for members of a non-employee's family are not reimbursable by the University.

15.0 Candidate Travel

The appropriate Vice-Chancellor may approve reimbursement of certain expenses of prospective professional employees visiting the University for employment interviews. These expenses are limited to transportation and subsistence expenses at the in-state rate for three days (five days if one is a Saturday). State funds can only be used for the candidate's meal up to per diem, and the remaining amount must be from a non-state fund.

Meals for the candidate should be limited to one restaurant meal and no more than three staff in attendance. Meal vouchers should be used when accepted by the restaurant and state funds cannot be used for staff attending a candidate meal.

16.0 Refreshments

Refreshments (e.g., coffee, soft drinks, cookies, doughnuts) may be served at official board meetings. Reimbursement may be paid from state funds for the actual cost, not to exceed \$5.00 per member, and required staff per meeting, per day. "Required Staff" shall be defined as an employee who, in the regular course of their duties, is expected to attend the meeting and any other employee whose presence is necessary to accomplish the purpose of the meeting.

Resource and References

[OSBM Budget Manual](#)

[North Carolina General Statutes](#)

[Internal Revenue Service – Taxable Fringe Benefit Guide](#)