

21.0 TRAVEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Alcorn State University has established guidelines for travel reimbursement of employees. All rules and regulations contained herein apply to all employees for University domestic and international travel. Any exceptions to the guidelines must be authorized by the Vice President for Fiscal Affairs.

21.1 DEFINITION OF REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

Reimbursable travel expenses are those expenses authorized and incurred while transacting official business away from the campus site. Basic reimbursable expenses may include such items as business meals, transportation and lodging.

21.2 TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

21.2.1 AIR TRANSPORTATION

For all flights which are not booked through one of the contract travel agencies, a cost comparison showing a minimum of 2 fares must be provided. This cost comparison must show the fare, any issuance cost and a savings. This information shall be submitted along with the employees travel voucher. Neither of these quotes should be through a travel agency if they will not be used. When booking over the Internet, a passenger receipt and itinerary shall accompany the request for reimbursement. When booking through one of the contract travel agencies, the travel agent will send the traveling employee a confirmation of their travel, which must be attached to the expense voucher for reimbursement.

When traveling by regularly scheduled air service, travelers are to utilize their local airport. Use of the local airport is assumed to result in travel costs that are more economical to the state.

Any bonus or promotional gratuity received as a result of official state travel shall be used to offset or reduce the cost of subsequent official state travel. Under no circumstances can the traveler keep a bonus or promotional gratuity earned for his own personal use.

The least expensive routing shall be used when calculating the difference between airfare and travel in personal vehicle. In calculating the difference between airfare and travel by personal vehicle, such factors additional lodging and meal expenses, taxi fares, parking and other airport-related expenses must be taken into account.

21.2.2 PRIVATE VEHICLE TRAVEL

Reimbursement for the use of a personal vehicle for official business is based on actual miles traveled. The current reimbursement rate if no government-owned vehicle is available is .565 cents per mile traveled (effective January 1, 2013). A Revised Mileage Reimbursement Rate memo will be sent to notify you of any changes.

When two or more employees travel in one vehicle, only one travel expense at the authorized reimbursement rate per mile shall be allowed. The person claiming reimbursement shall report the names of other state employee passengers.

When more than one person from the University is attending the same meeting or function for which reimbursement of travel expenses will be required, the employees are required to use University transportation to help maximize the use of budgeted funds.

21.2.3 RENTAL VEHICLE

When a rental vehicle is for official state business within the state, only the actual cost of the rental vehicle and fuel can be claimed for reimbursement when such rental is less expensive than the current mileage reimbursement rate referenced in the Revised Mileage Reimbursement Rate memorandum.

An intermediate size vehicle is normally the largest rental that will be reimbursed. Naturally, there will be occasions for which a larger vehicle will be required in order to carry out the state's business.

The state will not reimburse for rental cars obtained for personal use such as sightseeing or optional travel to and from restaurants while on official state business travel. Only the rental vehicle which is consistent with the size requirements of the business task to be performed will be reimbursed.

Rental vehicles can be requested through Agile Fleet Management, our University's rental management software at <http://alcorn.agilefleet.com/-VehiclesRates.asp>. It should also be indicated on the travel voucher in the public carrier column. Please indicate that this is a vehicle rental.

21.2.4 VEHICLE RENTAL INSURANCE

The current vehicle rental contracts include unlimited mileage and free CDW/LDW insurance. The option to purchase insurance should always be declined when a vehicle is rented utilizing the state contract. Insurance purchases will not be reimbursed as per the above information. The state is self-insured. Agencies should purchase CDW only when a rental vehicle is rented not utilizing the state contract as the state provides the liability portion of the coverage.

You must always be covered by insurance either provided by the contract or by purchase, should you utilize a vendor that is not on state contract.

21.2.5 MEALS

For overnight travel, the maximum state meal reimbursement rate will be used. The rate for high cost areas has been pre-calculated. Meal tips should be included in the actual meal expense and shall not exceed 20% of the maximum daily meal reimbursement claimed. Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable. An Updates Meal Reimbursement Rate memorandum will be sent to inform you of any changes.

Daily meal caps for cities are subject to change and can be viewed at:

<http://www.dfa.state.ms.us/Purchasing/Travel/convertedrates.pdf>.

Any fees charged for attending the official meetings of a convention, seminar or similar convocation, which includes a meal, are excluded from the daily maximum. Claims for reimbursement for these fees must be supported by a receipt when these fees cause the total daily reimbursement claimed for meals to exceed the maximum daily rate.

Employees will not be reimbursed for meal expenses on trips that do not require an overnight stay.

Meals for international travel will be reimbursed at their actual cost. Since there are no limits on international travel meal expenses, receipts are required to be submitted with the Travel Request and Reimbursement Form. When converting foreign currency to dollars for the purpose of reimbursement, you must attach proof of the official rate exchange to the Travel Request and Reimbursement Form for reimbursement.

21.2.6 LODGING

Lodging accommodations are to be arranged and paid for by the traveler and shall be in reasonable relationship to the average cost for the cities where the expenses are incurred. Expenses incurred for lodging must be supported by an itemized receipt showing a zero balance indicating the bill has been paid. Because this is not normally shown by most hotels on receipts, the travelers must request this upon checking out. Photocopies of hotel receipts are not acceptable.

Reimbursement will not be made for lodging in a private home. The employee must complete and submit an In-House Certification Form if seeking reimbursement for meals.

If more than one employee shares a hotel/ motel room, each employee may report a pro-rate share of the costs on his or her travel reimbursement request. The receipts should contain the names of all people sharing the hotel/ motel room. An employee on travel status, who is accompanied by a non-employee, shall claim reimbursement at the single hotel/ motel room rate only. Travelers are expected to secure the most economical rate from the hotel.

Lodging other than hotels/motels such as apartments, dormitories, etc. may be used when they result in a lower cost. An itemized receipt is still required (i.e., itemized daily room charges, applicable taxes, phone charges, etc.)

21.2.7 INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

All travel outside the Continental limits of the United States (Canada, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Mexico are outside the limits), must obtain the approving signatures of the President prior to undertaking any foreign travel. A Travel Authorization Request form must be completed and submitted to the President's Office. Individuals must start the paperwork and approval process in advance to allow a minimum of six weeks for its completion.

An approved Travel Authorization Request form must be attached to the Travel Voucher when any associated reimbursement or payment is requested. A copy of this form shall be used to request a travel advance if one is necessary. If actual expenses exceed the estimated expenses listed on the Travel Authorization form, the original form shall be resubmitted showing the excess charges and must be approved again by the appropriate departments.

21.2.8 CURRENCY EXCHANGE FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT EXPENSE VOUCHER

When converting foreign currency to dollars for the purpose of reimbursement, you must attach proof of the official rate of exchange to the Travel Voucher for reimbursement. Any official and documented statement of the official rate of exchange will be acceptable. It is recommended that the traveler should obtain a currency conversion upon arrival at his or her destination so that the rate applicable to the dates of travel is documented.

The rate of exchange from and to U.S. dollars can be obtained from American Express, any bank, via the Internet on a website such as <http://finance.yahoo.com/m3?u> or by calling the State Travel Office at (601) 359-3647. This will be the rate of exchange for the specific date(s) given and may vary when the charge is transmitted to the employee's credit card. If there is a difference between the amounts the employee is reimbursed and the amount charged to the credit card, an amended Travel Voucher may be submitted to correct the reimbursement. A copy of the original reimbursed Travel Voucher and a copy of the credit card charge must be included.

Note: Travel to Alaska is considered within the continental limits of the United States and meals would be reimbursed at the maximum state reimbursement rate allowed.

21.2.9 EMERGENCY TRAVEL

When emergency travel is required and the employee is unable to obtain advance approval of the trip, a written detailed explanation must be provided before reimbursement can be made. This statement should include the conditions which made the trip an emergency, the reason that prior approval was not obtained, and the signature of the employee along with the date. The employee must obtain approval from the appropriate departments.

21.2.10 OTHER ALLOWABLE EXPENSES**21.2.10.1 PHONE CHARGES, POSTAGE AND OTHER EXPENSES**

Phone calls, postage and other expenses included in the Other Authorized Expenses column must be certified at the bottom of the Travel Voucher by the employee that the expenses are for valid business expenses. The employee's signature on the Travel Voucher qualifies as such certification.

Phone calls itemized on a hotel bill should be circled and indication made if they were for business or deducted and not claimed if they were personal calls. Calls home are considered personal expenses and are not reimbursable. Calls to the office to check voice mail are reimbursable.

Calls via personal cell phones are not reimbursable.

21.2.10.2 TAXI FARES

Fares for taxis or airport transportation services in excess of \$10.00 require a receipt which must be attached to the Travel Voucher to receive reimbursement for that item.

The state does not reimburse taxi fares for optional travel to and from restaurants.

Travel tip: The average tip for taxi drivers runs between \$1.00 and \$2.00 per bag. Some individuals tip between 15% and 20% of the total fare. Tips that exceed \$10.00 must be justified and require a receipt which must be attached to the Travel Voucher.

21.2.10.3 BAGGAGE HANDLING

For skycaps, the reasonable charges will be allowed without receipt. Reasonable is usually defined as \$1.00 per bag for each level of handling.

At the counter, charges for baggage at check-in may vary per airline. These charges are allowable and will be reimbursed. A receipt is required for charges in excess of \$10.00.

21.2.10.4 HOTEL/AIRPORT PARKING

For charges in excess of \$10.00 per day, receipts must be attached to the Travel Voucher.

Valet parking tips may be reimbursed between \$2.00 and \$5.00. Shuttle tips may be reimbursed up to \$5.00 per ride and baggage handling may be reimbursed at \$1.00 and \$2.00 per bag.

21.2.10.5 LAUNDRY CHARGES

One reasonable laundry expense is reimbursable for each 7 consecutive days that travelers are required to be away from their official duty station on official state business. This does not mean that a laundry expense will be reimbursed when the employee returns home at the end of 7 days away from home. It does mean that if the employee will be away from home 7 days, a reasonable laundry or cleaning expense will be reimbursed recognizing that it would be difficult to carry more than 5 days of clothing at a time.

If after a complete, written justification, the agency head deems it necessary for an employee to be paid for additional cleaning/pressing charges while traveling on official State business, the attachment of the approved justification to the request for reimbursement of travel expenses will enable the employee to be reimbursed for such charges.

21.3 TRAVEL ADVANCES

Here is the policy for travel advances:

- Advances may be made for group/team travel.
- The group/team coach or leader may request advances.
- Requests for advances of travel funds must be approved by appropriate department administrator.
- The approved Payment Request form and emergency contact list must reach the appropriate department at least 5 work days prior to the date the check is needed.
- Advances are not to exceed estimated expenses.
- An advance will not be issued earlier than 20 days before the travel start date. As soon as the employee returns from the travel, a Travel Voucher must be completed and the advance settled.

- Original receipts are required and should be attached to the Travel Reimbursement Voucher.
- If an advance is not settled within 10 working days after the end of the month in which travel was completed the employee's paycheck will be held until the debt to the University is resolved. Only 1 travel advance shall be outstanding at a time.
- Each advance must include an emergency contact list (the name of each student, the name of his or her parent or guardian and contact phone number).

21.4 AIR TRAVEL CREDIT CARD

When University employees use the official travel agents, such as Avanti and Gavin/Robinson, to make airline reservations, the tickets are charged on the University's air travel credit card (American Express). The agent verifies with the University the approval of the travel request and obtains the travel Purchase Order number or encumbrance number on the travel request. Following verification, the tickets are generated electronically and employees can present proof of identification upon boarding their flight.

Employees must remember to return the pink copy of the approved travel request form on time to ensure their airline tickets are approved for payment and to avoid any delays.

21.5 TRAVEL REPORTING AND REIMBURSEMENT

An employee traveling on official state business is expected to exercise the same care incurring expenses as would a prudent person traveling for personal reasons. Travel for business should be conducted at a minimum cost for achieving the success of the mission. Travelers shall request air, train, bus, hotel and vehicle rental reservations as far in advance as possible and shall utilize the lowest logical rate available.

Travel reimbursement will be made for all taxes paid by the traveler; however, when expenses are billed directly to the governmental entity, taxes should not be charged and paid.

One state employee should not claim expenses for another state employee. Travel Vouchers should be typed or completed in ink and signed by the employee. The signature is a certification by the traveler that reimbursement is being requested for actual expenses that are valid business expenses.

- Hotel/motel receipts must be itemized in order to be reimbursed.
- Express check-out receipts which do not provide an itemized hotel bill are not acceptable.
- The hotel bill submitted shall be the original form the hotel provides when the bill is paid.

Necessary travel expenses do not include personal expense items such as entertainment and trip insurance.

A copy of the conference literature showing the conference hotel and rate or a copy of the registration form, which includes the housing reservation, must be attached to the Travel Voucher in order to be reimbursed.

Note: Each item on the Travel Reimbursement Form must be supported by a receipt in order to receive reimbursement (with the exception of meals which is noted in the “meals section” of the travel policy). Please staple your receipts to the Travel Voucher Form when it is submitted and keep a copy for your records. For international travel, receipts must be provided.