



## Employee Travel

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### 1.0 POLICY

This policy establishes procedures for providing reimbursement for travel and lodging in conjunction with in-state and out-of-state travel that is carried out in accordance with official Lee County business. Any situation not covered by this policy must be approved in advance by the County Manager in order to assure reimbursement.

#### 1.1 EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

An employee on official County 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, luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are prohibited. Employees will be responsible for unauthorized costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience. Willful violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

### 2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Mileage Rate:** The rate at which a person is reimbursed for use of a personal vehicle. The approved rate, which becomes effective at the beginning of each fiscal year, shall be the current standard IRS mileage allowance, or as otherwise determined by the Board of Commissioners.
- 2.2 Per Diem Rate:** The daily allowance for expenses incurred while traveling for County business.
- 2.3 Requesting Party:** The person who will be reimbursed for travel costs incurred while conducting County business or visiting for employee interviews.

### 3.0 PROCEDURE / RULE

3.1 Employees of Lee County will be reimbursed for travel at the approved federal mileage reimbursement rate for any travel directly associated with official County business. The Lee County Board of Commissioners may establish lump sum amounts to be paid to employees monthly in lieu of mileage reimbursement for expenses incurred by operating a vehicle inside the County. The Commissioners may also, at their discretion, provide vehicles for employee use instead of monetary reimbursement.

3.2 Travel on official County business outside of Lee County must be authorized by the Department Director. Overnight travel must be approved by the Finance Department and the County Manager in advance. A travel authorization form must be completed describing the travel requested, the purpose of the proposed trip, the proposed departure date and time, and the proposed return date and time. The travel authorization form should include all known or estimated expenses including, but not limited to:

- 1) Registration cost (conferences or training)
- 2) Per-diem meals
- 3) Lodging
- 4) Transportation (airfare, mileage, rental cars)
- 5) Other required expenses (shuttle/taxi service, parking, etc.)

Documentation must be provided to support the estimated cost of the trip. Conference registration forms and agendas provide the best documentation. **No registrations/reservations should be made before travel has been approved.**

3.3 To the extent possible, County vehicles should be used for travel. Passengers such as local government colleagues or immediate family members may ride in County vehicles subject to approval by the Department Director. **At no time should a County vehicle be driven by anyone other than a County employee.**

3.4 **Travel Expense and Reimbursement:** County employees are expected to use the most economical means of transportation available while considering time, distance and cost. County employees and officials traveling away from the County on official business will be reimbursed as follows:

A. **Transportation:**

1. **County vehicle:** Lee County pays total cost of operation and maintenance.
2. **Personal vehicle:** Reimbursement using current IRS allowable rate (shortest normal traveler's route).

3. **Rental vehicle:** Auto rental costs will be reimbursed when they are necessary and more cost effective than public conveyances, county vehicles or personal vehicles. Rental vehicles shall be used for business purposes only. Reimbursement will be based on actual costs incurred and must be supported by a receipt.
  4. **Public conveyance:** The actual cost of the fare (*with prior approval of the County Manager*).
  5. **Air:** Reimbursement for commercial air travel will be made upon presentation of receipt for such travel only at the coach rate on the least expensive airline fare offered.
  6. Employees who wish to use their personal vehicle to travel instead of using air or public conveyance will be reimbursed for travel at the lesser rate.
- B. Meals and Gratuities:** A traveler's meal allowance is set at the current Federal Meal and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) Per Diem Rates and will vary depending on the destination of the traveler. The per diem allowance in this policy is intended to cover travel expenses for meals, including tips and sales taxes. Per Diem rates for NC locations can be found on the Lee County intranet. Rates for out of state travel should be requested from the Finance Department.
1. During trips, which will necessitate overnight lodging of the employee, there will be a federal per diem limit which will cover all meals and gratuities and **no receipts** for meals will be required; however, a schedule or agenda will be required.
  2. Per Diem for the first day involved will be dependent upon the time of departure and on the last day upon the time of return as follows:
    - a. **Breakfast:** allowed when employees depart for travel *before 7:00 AM* or return *after 7:00 AM*.
    - b. **Lunch:** allowed when employees depart for travel *before noon* or return *after noon*.
    - c. **Dinner:** Allowed when employees depart for travel *before 7:00 PM* or return *after 7:00 PM*.
  3. During day trips, where the employee leaves and returns in the same work day, meals will only be reimbursed where business is discussed during the lunch meal. **A receipt and a meeting agenda will be required for reimbursement.**

4. Prearranged meals at conferences will be reimbursed at the actual cost and are not subject to the per diem limits. **Receipts are required.**
5. For overnight trips, meal per diems may be requested in advance, but a schedule or agenda is required to support the advance.

**C. Lodging:**

1. Eligible expenses include the lodging charge and tax only and should be based on the single overnight rate.
2. **Receipts** for all requests for lodging reimbursement **must be presented.**

**D. Miscellaneous Expenses:** Miscellaneous expenses such as parking, registration fees, etc., will be reimbursed upon presentation of appropriate receipts, or, where such receipts are unobtainable, upon presentation of a signed statement certifying such expenses.

**E. Non-reimbursable Expenses:**

1. Nothing shall be charged, paid or reimbursed for travel between an employee's home and the regularly scheduled workstation. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) considers this type of travel to be commuting.
2. Nothing shall be charged, paid or reimbursed for snacks, tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, clothing, medicine, personal care items, personal telephone calls, traffic violations, or parking tickets.
3. Nothing shall be charged, paid or reimbursed for movies, recreational fees or travel between the conference site and recreational side trips. The employee shall pay fees for hotel room movies and/or room service at the time of checkout.
4. Nothing shall be reimbursed for costs incurred for family members. All costs to be incurred for family members prior to the travel dates, i.e. registration or other fees, must be paid by the employee's personal check but can be forwarded to the vendor with the County's payment.

**F.** These lists of reimbursable and non-reimbursable expenses are not considered all inclusive. **Public purpose must be considered for all costs incurred.**

**3.5** Employees and officials traveling on a reimbursable basis for the County will keep an accurate record of their expenses. No reimbursement will be paid without a written travel claim signed by the employee and approved by the Department Director or County Manager. Within 15 days of the completion of any overnight travel, a travel

reconciliation must be provided to the Finance Department. Receipts for the cost of hotel, meals, parking, and related travel expenses, where required by this policy, must be attached to the reconciliation. Time of departure and return times must be recorded on the travel reimbursement form.

- 3.6 Employees and officials will be expected to commence the return to Lee County as soon as practical after the conclusion of their business.
- 3.7 Out-of-State travel must be authorized in advance by the County Manager.
- 3.8 The County Manager may authorize such advances for travel as he deems necessary. If the amount received as a travel advance exceeds the reported travel expense, settlement must be made at the time the Travel Reimbursement/Reconciliation is submitted; if settlement is not made, the amount due will be deducted from the employee's next paycheck.
- 3.9 The payment of non-County employees' travel/meals is allowed only when the Department Director is conducting official County business during normal meal hours with persons appointed or assigned by the Board of County commissioners or its designee, and the meal becomes a reasonable function of the process.
- 3.10 Failure to comply with this policy may result in **disciplinary action and/or personal liability** for expenses incurred.

#### 4.0 APPENDIX / APPENDICES

None.