

Government of the District of Columbia

Travel Policy and Procedures

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To establish uniform policies and standard procedures for travel undertaken by the employees of the District of Columbia Government working under the authority of the Mayor;
- 1.2 To utilize efficient and cost effective means of Transportation and travel related services as required by government operations;
- 1.3 To ensure that all travel and travel-related expenses and services are properly recorded, tracked, and maintained in the District of Columbia's Automated Accounting and Reporting Systems;
- 1.4 To ensure accountability through implementation of standardized evaluation and monitoring techniques that: 1) determine levels of compliance; 2) provide ongoing assessment; and 3) conduct periodic cost/benefit analyses. (To accomplish this purpose, an annual review of this document is recommended to update and/or make any appropriate changes to conform to prevailing best practices.)

2. AUTHORITY:

- 2.1 Sections 101, 201, 202 of the District of Columbia Procurement Practices
- 2.2 Act ("PPA") of 1985, effective February 21, 1986 (D.C. Law 6-85; D.C. Code §§1-1181.1(b)(1C), as amended by the sections 101(a)(1C), 101(f), 101(g), and 105 of the Procurement Reform Amendment Act of 1996, effective April 9, 1997 (D.C. Law 11-259; D.C. Official Code Section 2-301.01)
- 2.3 27 DCMR §§1801-1802 *et seq.*
- 2.4 United States General Services Administration Contract Number GS-23F-98004.

3. **SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all employees of the District of Columbia Government working under the authority of the Mayor.

4. **DEFINITIONS**

- 4.1 **Agency.** The term “agency” means an office, department, board, commission or other entity within the District government or an independent agency of the District government municipal corporation.
- 4.2 **Common Carrier.** The term “common carrier” means a private sector supplier of air, rail, shipping or bus transportation.
- 4.3 **Electronic Purchase.** The term “electronic purchase” means the purchase of travel or travel-related services through the use of the electronic media, such as telephone, facsimile, Internet web service, and electronic mail.
- 4.4 **Government Travel Card or Travel Card.** The term “government travel card” or “travel card” means a credit card issued by the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP) through the District of Columbia Government Travel Card Program, to be utilized in accordance with this policy.
- 4.5 **Incidental Expenses.** The term “incidental expenses” means fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel maids and others. Incidental expenses will not include cost for alcoholic beverages, tobacco, movie rentals, entertainment, or other expenses of a personal nature that are not related to the official business of the District.
- 4.6 **Local Travel.** The term “local travel” means travel to a location that is less than fifty (50) miles from an employee’s workplace.
- 4.7 **Lodging.** The term “lodging” means expenses incurred from use of a hotel, motel, inn, guest house or other establishment that provides lodging to transient guests for overnight sleeping facilities. Lodging does not include accommodations on airplanes, trains, buses or ships that is included in transportation costs. The maximum allowable lodging rate will not exceed the lodging rate issued by the Federal Government that is specific for each city and county in the continental United States, as adjusted and issued annually (see www.gsa.gov for current rates).
- 4.8 **Meals.** The term “meals” relates to expenses for breakfast, lunch, dinner and related reasonable tips and taxes. Alcoholic beverages and all entertainment expenses are specifically excluded from meal expenses.

- 4.9 **Mileage Rate.** The term "*mileage rate*" means the reimbursable rate for the authorized use of an employee's personal vehicle for local or out-of-town travel for official government business (see www.gsa.gov for current rates).
- 4.10 **Out-of-Town Travel.** The term "*out-of-town travel*" means travel for official government business to a location that is at least fifty (50) miles from an employee's work place.
- 4.11 **Per Diem Allowance.** The term "*per diem allowance*" means the subsistence allowance or daily payment provided to employees as reimbursement for meals and related incidental expenses. The amount of such per diem is equivalent to that set by the Federal Government for travel by its employees (see www.gsa.gov for current rates).
- 4.12 **Reimbursement.** The term "*reimbursement*" means compensation for costs that the District will pay to an employee under the conditions of this travel policy.
- 4.13 **Taxi Fares.** The term "*taxi fares*" means the cost of a ride in a taxi as documented by a valid and accurate receipt.
- 4.14 **Travel Advance.** The term "*travel advance*" means the prepayment of travel expenses to an employee in cash or check in the name of the employee.
- 4.15 **Travel Card.** The term "travel card" means the credit card issued to employees of the District Government for approved travel expenditures in accordance with this policy and in accordance with the *Government Travel Card Program* administered by the Office of Contracting and Procurement. The policy and procedures for the travel card program can be found at www.ocp.in.dc.gov under Policies/Forms.
- 4.16 **Waiver.** The term "waiver" means a written exemption provided by an agency head to an employee that exempts the employee from restrictions relating to the per diem rate for lodging or from other travel restrictions. A waiver shall only be given as a result of extenuating circumstances which must be documented in the waiver request.

5. GENERAL POLICY

5.1 **Justification. All government travel must be justified.**

For employee travel to be reimbursable, it must be justified as advantageous to the interests of the District government. Official government travel by employees includes travel that is required to attend authorized meetings, conferences, conventions, seminars, or professional training sessions. Official travel may also include travel and travel-related services for interviewing prospective employees of the District government.

5.2 **Authorization. All official travel must be authorized in advance.**

Each agency head, or his or her designee, shall consider whether the requested employee travel is necessary to effectively accomplish the business of the District government before authorizing such travel.

5.3 **Responsibility. Employees are responsible for making their own travel arrangements.**

Once travel is duly authorized, employees are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and shall request the government rate for airline and lodging.

5.4 **Utilization. Tender provided for official government travel can only be used for official travel and travel-related items.**

An individual authorized to receive Metro Passes, Taxi Vouchers, a Credit Card under the Government Travel Card Program, or any other monetary tender may only pay for travel and travel-related expenses (*transportation, meals, gratuities, travelers check fees, official calls, faxes, telegraph charges*) incurred while *on official government travel*.

5.5 **Exclusivity. Travel funds may only be used for official travel costs of authorized employees.**

The use of government travel funds to pay for the travel or travel-related expenses of accompanying family or friends or for personal expenses (such as alcoholic beverages, tobacco, movie rentals, entertainment, laundry or dry cleaning) is *strictly prohibited*, with the exception of reasonable laundry and/or dry cleaning expenses for employees on authorized trips of more than 5 days.

5.6 Limitations. Unnecessary costs are not allowed.

Excessive costs (such as the use of unnecessary routes, late-fees, luxury accommodations and services deemed unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business) are not acceptable and will not be reimbursed under this policy. Employees will be personally responsible for such excessive costs and for any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience.

5.7 Training. Advance authorization is required at all times.

Written authorization is required for all training related activities (courses, seminars, meetings or conferences) that include travel. In addition to transportation costs, the Travel Authorization Form captures costs for tuition, fees, books and related materials, and membership fees.

5.8 Expense Reporting. Travel expenses must be reported promptly.

Employees must submit an account for official travel expenses incurred on a Travel Expense Report Form to their agency head or designee for approval within 10 working days following the completion of travel. All receipts must be attached and the report must reflect any tenders provided to the traveler.

5.9 Conferences and Conventions. Restrictions on the number of employees.

The number of employees authorized to attend conferences is limited to those whose attendance will substantially benefit the District government's service obligations. Authorizations will be entirely based on an employee's official duties and responsibilities, and shall be approved by the agency head or his/her designee.

5.10 Reimbursable Items

5.10.1 Transportation

Mode of travel and ground transportation will be authorized and reimbursed based on reasonableness, in accordance with 6.2 and 6.3.

5.10.2 Lodging

Hotel reimbursement is based on actual cost and must be supported by an itemized hotel receipt. The maximum hotel reimbursement is the federal per diem lodging rate for that city. Hotel expenses beyond that rate are the personal responsibility of the employee. (See 6.3.4. below for more specific policies.)

5.10.3 Meals and Incidental Expenses

The reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses will be the daily *per diem* allowance equal to that set by the Federal Government for travel by its employees (see www.gsa.gov for current rates). Receipts are not required unless the costs exceed the per diem rate. When costs exceed the per diem rate, each individual receipt must be submitted to and signed by the authorizing Agency head or designee in order for employee to receive reimbursement.

5.10.4 Travelers Checks Fees

Service fees for purchasing travelers checks of more than \$500 for authorized government travel are reimbursable upon furnishing proof of purchase.

5.10.5 Travel-related Expenses

Expenses incurred while performing official business activities, such as telecommunication charges and normal baggage handling fees will be reimbursed, as well as the costs of obtaining any necessary passports and visas.

5.10.6 Conference and Seminar Registration

Conference and seminar registration and/or subscription fees are fully reimbursable if advance authorization has been given in accordance with this policy. When early registration provides an opportunity to pay a lower rate, reimbursement will be limited to that lower rate, unless such failure to register early can be justified by employee and is waived by Agency head. It will be the responsibility of the employee to provide sufficient support documentation to prove that he/she has taken advantage of any early registration offers or to justify failure to register early.

5.11 Expectations. All expenditures must be reasonable.

Only the actual, necessary, and reasonable expenses incurred by an employee while on authorized travel are to be paid or reimbursed by the District Government, with the exception of meal and incidental expenses that are to be paid by the per diem allowance. District employees must exercise good judgment when making travel arrangements and travel-related purchases.

5.12 **Waivers.** Waivers shall only be given in extenuating circumstances.

A written exemption or “waiver” may be requested by an employee from his or her agency head to exempt the employee from restrictions relating to the per diem rate for lodging (see 6.3.4) or from other travel restrictions. A waiver shall only be authorized as a result of extenuating circumstances which must be documented in the waiver request, and Agency heads shall keep a separate record of such exemptions granted to employees to be made available upon request to OCFO, OCP or OCA.

6. **SPECIFIC POLICY**

6.1 **Travel Advances**

6.1.1 **Request for Travel Advance**

Employees authorized to travel may request a prepayment of actual travel expenditures such as confirmed airfare, lodging, conference fees and ground transportation, to be approved by Agency head or designee. Such prepayment may either be as a travel advance payable to an employee or directly to the service provider. If the employee has already paid for these expenditures from his or her own funds, then reimbursement may be requested for same. In addition, employees authorized to travel may request a travel advance which includes the per diem allowance for meals and incidentals and related reimbursable costs such as estimated ground transportation. The criteria in 7.2.1 must first be met before requests for travel advances are approved.

6.1.2. **Preference for Use of Travel Cards**

It is preferred for employees to use District Government travel cards instead of travel advances for all payments of expenses for official Government travel (notwithstanding paragraph 6.1.2. below), and such use shall be in accordance with the *Government Travel Card Program* administered by the Office of Contracting and Procurement. The policy and procedures for this program can be found at www.ocp.in.dc.gov under Policies/Forms. (See clause 7 below.)

6.1 Local Travel

6.2.1 Metro Pass (Bus and Subway)

Each agency will make bulk purchases of bus and subway passes for use by employees who must travel within the city to meetings or training activities. Authorizations, disbursement records and documentation will be maintained according to accounting requirements established by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

6.2.2 Taxi Fares

The use of a taxi by an employee for local travel may only be reimbursed if there are extenuating circumstances (that make it clear that use of subway or bus or a District vehicle is not viable) and such use has been approved in advance in writing by Agency head or designee. Agency heads shall keep a separate record of such approvals which shall be made available upon request to OCFO or OCP or OCA.

6.2.3 Personal Vehicle Mileage

The District government will provide reimbursement to an employee for the use of his or her personal vehicle for official government business only when such use is advantageous to the District Government and is authorized in advance by Agency head or designee. Prior to authorizing payments for use of personal vehicles, managers must check to see that "no government-owned vehicle" is available for use, as per 6.2.4 below. Reimbursement for such use shall include mileage at the mileage rate set by the Federal Government for its employees (see www.gsa.gov for current rates), plus related parking expenses.

6.2.4 Government Fleet Program

The District's Department of Public Works (DPW) administers a program that oversees the maintenance and utilization of government-owned vehicles. Authorized users of District Government vehicles shall obtain necessary gas, oil, maintenance and repairs from DPW garage facilities, and will only be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses (gas, oil, repairs, and other vehicle expenses) when it is impractical to obtain such service at the District's facilities. Prior to authorizing payments for use of personal vehicles, managers must check to see that "no government-owned vehicle" is available for use. DPW will provide annual reports on the "over or under-utilization" of all vehicles and an annual utilization plan that optimizes fleet services.

6.3 Out of Town Travel

6.3.1 Mode of Travel

a. Selection of Travel Options

Employees are expected to be prudent in their selection of travel options. While air travel is often the most economical and practical mode of transportation for out of town travel, consideration should be given to the use of rail, boat, or bus transportation, use of a government-owned vehicle, car rental or use of an employee's personal vehicle when it is either the most economical alternative or there is no other option at the time. Air travel costs must be for coach or tourist fares at roundtrip or excursion rates.

b. Use of Personal Vehicles

Personal vehicles may only be used when authorized in advance of travel by Agency heads or designees and reimbursement for such authorized use shall include reasonable parking, toll, mileage and related expenses. Mileage shall be reimbursed at the prevailing mileage rate set by the Federal Government for its employees (see www.gsa.gov for current rates). Mileage should be calculated based on the distance from the starting point to the destination. When travel originates from a location other than the workplace, mileage claimed should be the lesser of the distance: 1) from home to the destination, or 2) from work to the destination.

c. Car Rental

A contract for car rental may only be entered into by an employee when authorized prior to travel by Agency head or designee, in which case, reimbursement for such authorized use shall include reasonable rental and insurance fees, parking, toll and related expenses.

6.3.2 Taxi Fares

Taxis fares may be authorized for taxi trips during out of town travel that relate to official (non-personal) purposes. Payments in cash for out of town taxi travel are reimbursable only with a valid and accurate receipt or, alternatively, the employee may charge such out-of-town travel taxi charges to their Travel Card, in accordance with the Travel Card policy, as set forth in clause 7.

6.3.3 Meals and Incidental Expenses

- a. The reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses will be the daily *per diem* allowance equal to that set by the Federal

Government for travel by its employees (see www.gsa.gov for current rates).

- b. Receipts are not required unless the costs exceed the per diem rate. When costs exceed the per diem rate, each individual receipt must be submitted to and signed by the authorizing Agency head or designee in order for the employee to receive reimbursement for the amount exceeding the said per diem rate.
- c. The per diem rate will be adjusted as necessary to account for partial days or meals provided as part of a conference. Adjustments to the per diem allowance for meals included as part of a conference or which are otherwise provided is: 50% - dinner, 25% - lunch, and 25% - breakfast.

6.3.4 Lodging

- a. Reimbursement is based on actual cost and must be supported by an itemized hotel receipt.
- b. Charges in excess of a single room will not be eligible for reimbursement.
- c. The maximum allowable hotel reimbursement will not exceed the lodging rate issued by the Federal Government that is specific for each city and county in the continental United States, as adjusted and issued annually (see www.gsa.gov for current rates.) Lodging expenses beyond that rate will be the personal responsibility of the employee, subject to 6.3.4.d.
- d. Requests for waiver of the federal lodging rate will be considered for the following circumstances:
 - i. Unavailability of lodging at the federal rate (subject to verification.)
 - ii. The remote location of available lodging at the federal rate, if the time and expense to travel back and forth is excessive relative to the added cost of staying at the conference location.
 - iii. Members of a group staying in a common room or suite to lower costs.
- e. Requests for hotel waiver must be supported by two rate quotes from hotels showing the cost of rooms exceeding the GSA lodging rate or, alternatively, showing that the location of a hotel with available rooms at the lodging rate is too far from the conference location.
- f. Requests for waiver of the federal lodging rate, in accordance with 6.3.4.d., must be approved prior to travel.
- g. The number of reimbursable lodging nights will be determined by the conference and travel schedule and the employee's ability to depart or arrive home at a reasonable hour. An

estimate of the number of nights that lodging is required must be entered on the advance authorization form.

- h. Travelers are directed to request exemption from any hotel taxes, based upon their government ID and their travel authorization form. However, travelers are advised that the application of hotel tax varies from state to state and even within states.
- i. Phone Calls and Other Expenses.
 - i. Business phone calls are reimbursable and should be so noted on the hotel bill.
 - ii. One personal phone call, reimbursed up to \$5 per night, is allowed for each night an individual is on travel. Additional personal phone calls, entertainment, alcohol and other personal expenses are not reimbursable.

7. TRAVEL CARD PROGRAM

7.1 Travel Card

Where possible, it is preferred for employees to use District Government travel cards instead of travel advances for all payments of expenses for official Government travel, and such use shall be in accordance with the *Government Travel Card Program* administered by the Office of Contracting and Procurement. The policy and procedures for this program can be found at www.ocp.in.dc.gov under Policies/Forms.

7.2 Exemption from Travel Card Use

- 7.2.1 Agency heads may exempt an employee from use of a District Government travel card in a case in which:
 - a. It is in the best interest of the District Government to do so; and/or
 - b. Payment through a travel card is impractical or imposes unreasonable burdens or costs on District employees or District agencies.
- 7.2.2 Agency heads shall keep a separate record of such exemptions to be made available upon request to OCFO, OCP or OCA.

8. **PROCEDURES FOR TENDER OTHER THAN TRAVEL CARDS**

Each agency head is responsible for purchasing, distributing, and maintaining daily records on tenders other than travel cards for local travel to perform official government business. The internal practice of each agency head must have the approval of the CFO and shall track balances on a daily basis. Records will be maintained to reflect the employee's name, department, justification and authorization for travel, the tender provided and proof of cost.

9. **ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Responsibilities for the implementation and application of the District's Travel Policies and Procedures shall be shared by:

- 9.1. **The Office of the City Administrator** – will conduct annual reviews of best travel policy practices to optimize benefits, cost savings, and service for District employees required to travel in the performance of their duties. The City Administrator or his/her designee shall consider all requests for authorization of official government travel to be undertaken by Agency heads, as well as related requests for approvals or waivers, in accordance with all rules, regulations, policies and procedures involving District Government travel.
- 9.2. **The Office of the Chief Financial Officer** – will be the lead agency for monitoring the travel policy, and for maintaining financial control and reporting. Payment of travel costs and the processing of requests for travel advances and reimbursements are the responsibility of the OCFO FO.
- 9.3. **The Office of Contracting and Procurement** – will oversee the Travel Card program and report to the CFO on all matters pertaining to Travel Card use by employees of the District of Columbia government.
- 9.4. **The Department of Public Works** – will oversee the Fleet Management Travel Policy and Procedures and report to the CFO on all matters pertaining to Travel by employees of the District of Columbia government.
- 9.5. **Employees** – All employees must comply with all rules, regulations, policies and procedures involving official government travel and must seek all required approvals or authorizations from their Agency head or designee.

- 9.6 **Agency Heads** – Agency heads or their designees shall consider all requests for travel authorization by their employees and all requests for related approvals or waivers and shall ensure compliance with all rules, regulations, policies and procedures involving official District government travel. Agency heads must seek all authorizations and related approvals or waivers for their own official travel from the City Administrator or his/her designee.

10. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy will become effective immediately and continue until amended or revoked.

Authorized:

Mayor Anthony A. Williams

Signature

Date