

# Approved Travel Policy Recommendations

## Recommendations by Section

### Recommendation 1

#### 1. PURPOSE AND POLICY

- Note that the policy and accompanying procedures will be administratively updated as needed to maintain consistency with state and federal guidelines. Examples are state/federal changes to specific dollar thresholds for specified expenditures and new state/federal authorized reimbursable expenditures not already addressed in the policy. This is consistent with updates already made as mileage reimbursement and CONUS rates are adjusted by state and/or federal government.
- Update statutory reference for foreign travel due to change in Florida Statute subsection numbering.

### Recommendation 2

#### 2. DEFINITIONS- Term Definitions need to be updated, omitted or added

- Add a Foreign Travel Class- Travel outside the United States
- Add the definition of *Workshop* as this has become a more common title of training events.
- Replace *DOT Map Mileage* with use of an independent mapping service to select the least number of miles from the traveler's official headquarters or home to the point of destination.
- Add additional definitions for:
  - *Local Mileage*- Locations within Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough and Manatee counties. Commuting mileage, which is the mileage between the traveler's residence and official headquarters, will be deducted from local mileage trips that occur at the start and/or end of the day.
  - *Out of Town Mileage*- Any travel outside of Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough and Manatee counties is out of town. Out of town mileage is computed from the traveler's official headquarters or home to the point of destination, whichever is shorter. There is no deduction for commuting mileage.
- Remove *Vicinity mileage*
- Clarify *Official Headquarters* to note this is the employee's assigned work location
- Revise *Post of Duty* to note a traveler's post of duty can change.

### Recommendation 3

#### 3. APPROVAL FOR TRAVEL

- Add additional narrative on what prior approval and approval of actual costs look like
- Address approval for expenditures not addressed in policy (see section 6 below)
- Review each Official/Agency/Department to ensure approval authorities are still relevant
- Move Section 4 Items (i) (1-3) under this section as it provides more of the guideline for authorization of expenditure of County funds for travel.

# Approved Travel Policy Recommendations

## **Recommendation 4**

### 4. REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

- Restructure this section to be more clear and consistent

(a) Definitions of Classes and Allowed Subsistence for Meals and Per Diem	
(b) Travel Arrangements	
(c) Hotels and Lodging	
(d) Airline Fare	
	(1) Cancellation of non-refundable airline tickets
	(2) Additional airline costs (i.e. baggage, seat selection, priority boarding, itinerary changes, etc)
(e) Registration Fees	
(f) Personal Vehicle and County Vehicle Reimbursements	
	(1) Personal Vehicle
	(a) Local Mileage
	(b) Out of Town Mileage
	(2) County Vehicle
(g) Rental Cars	
(h) Private Aircraft	
(i) Different Travel for Convenience	
(j) Other Expenses	
	(1) Taxi, Parking, Storage, Tolls and Gratuity Fees
	(2) Telecommunication Fees
	(3) Laundry Services
	(4) Travelers Checks
	(5) Currency Exchange Fees
	(6) Portage Fees

- Recommended Item updates

### **Recommendation 4**- Meals and Per Diem

- Allowed Subsistence for Meals and Per Diem
  - Remove specific per diem dollar amounts and reference the State Statute and 75% of statutory per diem for day of departure and return.
  - Update Table B Rate column to reflect link to GSA (General Services Administration) website or Intranet link with the CONUS (Continental United States) rates. This will eliminate the need to amend the entire policy as the GSA rates are amended.
  - Remove Table C

## Approved Travel Policy Recommendations

### **Recommendation 4-** Travel Arrangements

- Move Section 8 TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS to SECTION 4.
  - Clarification of when to use the travel agency and for what services- this section states the travel agency shall be used but then later states they should be given the opportunity to meet the best price available. This is confusing to employees and travel coordinators trying to book travel.

### **Recommendation 4-** Hotels and Lodging

- Item (i) (4-5) Change Item name to *Hotels and Lodging*
  - Add narrative encouraging employees to research and book a hotel or lodging resulting in the best savings to the County such as booking conference hotels with discounted rates and explore the availability of government room rates in nearby hotels and rentals. This will allow travelers to reserve rentals (e.g. – Airbnb) as a lodging option through the County’s contracted Travel Agency.
  - In (4) add to the travel time threshold to allow overnight booking when traveler won’t return home until after 10:00 P.M. For example: “Overnight lodging, prior to each day of attendance at an authorized conference or convention shall be permitted if the traveler would have to depart his home or post of duty prior to 6:00 A.M. to arrive to the event on time. If traveling by vehicle, overnight lodging for the final day of an authorized conference or convention shall be permitted if the traveler is unable to return home by 10:00 P.M.” This addresses employee’s safety and consistency of hotel reservations countywide.

### **Recommendation 4-** Airline fare

- Item (f) – Airline fare
  - Remove the portion regarding scheduling through the contracted travel agency as this is addressed in TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS (proposed section 4).
  - Add *Baggage Fees* as a reimbursable expense with a limit to one checked bag per person.
  - Add any expense above the base fee must be justified and pre-approved.
  - Add in the event of cancellation after a ticket has been purchased, the traveler has the option to use the ticket later for business related travel or purchase the ticket from the County at face value for personal use.

### **Recommendation 4-** Mileage

- Item (k)- Mileage for use of privately owned vehicles
  - Change name to *Personal Vehicle and County Vehicle Reimbursements*
  - Remove DOT mileage reference and replace with documentation of mileage is required using an independent mapping service selecting the route with the least number of miles.
  - Remove reference to *Vicinity Mileage*

## Approved Travel Policy Recommendations

- Change that mileage rates will change in accordance with IRS announced changes and remove effective January 1.
- Clarify when employees carpool, only one mileage reimbursement is allowed.
- Split into two sections:
  - (1) Personal Vehicle – When travelers are authorized to use their privately owned vehicles for any work related travel, they will be reimbursed at the rates announced by the IRS as standard mileage rates. This mileage rate includes the cost for fuel, insurance and wear and tear on their vehicle.
    - Local Mileage- Locations within Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough and Manatee counties. Commuting mileage, which is the mileage between the traveler’s residence and official headquarters, will be deducted from local mileage trips that occur at the start and/or end of the day.
    - Travelers required to attend a meeting before reporting to their assigned location on a workday shall be entitled to reimbursement in the following manner:
      - If the mileage from home to the meeting, plus the mileage from the meeting to the normal work location (total mileage) exceeds the usual mileage from the traveler’s home to their normal work location; the traveler is entitled to be reimbursed only for the difference in mileage.
      - If the total mileage described above does not exceed the usual mileage from the traveler’s home to their normal work location, no reimbursement is permitted.
    - Out of Town Mileage- Any travel outside of Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough and Manatee counties is out of town. Out of town mileage is computed from the traveler’s official headquarters or home to the point of destination, whichever is shorter. There is no deduction for commuting mileage.
  - (2) County Vehicle Reimbursements- If a County vehicle is used, tolls and fuel will be reimbursed when receipts are submitted.

### **Recommendation 4**\_Other Expenses

- Item (o)- Other Expenses
  - Combine (1), (2) and (7) and rename: Transportation, Parking, Storage, Tolls and Gratuity Fees
    - Amend this section to remove dollar amounts and reference the amount requiring receipts to align with the State allowance (currently \$25):  
[https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/AA/Manuals/Auditing/Reference Guide For State Expenditures.pdf](https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/AA/Manuals/Auditing/Reference%20Guide%20For%20State%20Expenditures.pdf)

## Approved Travel Policy Recommendations

- Replace “appropriate memoranda” with “an explanatory memorandum” in regards to missing receipts.
  - For tips, state that tips are allowable in accordance with the State of Florida Expenditure guide.
  - Add *Transportation Network Companies* as reimbursable expenses for transportation. This will allow travelers to use additional transportation options such as Uber and Lyft.
  - Reimbursement for parking will be for the amount of the self-parking rate. Valet parking will be a reimbursable expense only where it is the only method available or there is documentation to support that it was a necessity.
- (3) Telephone calls- rename *Telecommunication Fees* as Telephone fees have changed
    - Telephone Fees are still relevant to emergency situations and/or foreign travel for long distance.
    - Add *Wi-Fi Fees* as reimbursable expenditures if it is not included in hotel stay.
  - (4) Actual Laundry and pressing expenses- Change name to *Laundry Services*
  - (5) Create item name- *Travelers Checks*
  - (6) Actual fees charged to exchange currency- Change name to *Currency Exchange Fees*
  - (8) Portage Fees
    - Create item name- *Portage Fees*
    - Amend this section to remove dollar amounts and reference the reimbursable amount to align with the State allowance (currently \$1 per bag not to exceed \$5 per incident)  
[https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/AA/Manuals/Auditing/Reference\\_Guide\\_For\\_State\\_Expenditures.pdf](https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/AA/Manuals/Auditing/Reference_Guide_For_State_Expenditures.pdf)

### **Recommendation 5**

#### 5. METHOD OF PAYMENT FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES

- Add narrative “Travelers should request no more than 80% of the total estimated cost of the trip for travel advances and reconcile within 10 calendar days of returning from the trip.”

### **Recommendation 6**

#### 6. TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT VOUCHER FORMS

- Replace the word *Voucher* with *Approval*
- Add narrative to this section stating that advance and post approval is always required for Travel.
- Add a statement regarding the current reimbursement methods that items up to \$50 are to be reimbursed through petty cash, and items over \$50 to be reimbursed through iExpense. This

## Approved Travel Policy Recommendations

aligns with Clerk Finance's reimbursement policy and provides employees a convenient option for reimbursement under \$50.

- Add a statement that reimbursement for expenses not referenced in the policy will be addressed on a case by case basis, requiring written justification for the expense and the department director's approval.
- Add a statement that "any expenditure disallowed by the County is the responsibility of the employee."
- Add a statement that "By approving travel expenses, the approver is attesting that he/she has thoroughly reviewed each transaction and supporting documentation, and has verified that all transactions are allowable expenses."
- Remove all forms except for the *Local Travel Form* and include a link to the form
  - (a) Travel Preapproval through iExpense: Restate travelers must obtain advance approval for travel with expenses pre-paid by County P-card and any additional anticipated expenses through an approval calculated by iExpense. Currently, there are several different forms being used, either outdated or developed individually by a department. One of the challenges is every department is approving their travel differently.
    - Describe preparation of estimated travel costs to include items such as meals, mileage, taxi fare, etc., and use of the iExpense summary as the approval form to have signed. Include a link to the iExpense CBT (Computer Based Training).
  - (b) *Form C- Local Travel Expenses* - form used to obtain reimbursement through petty cash for Class C travel and includes only mileage, local parking, and tolls.
  - (c) Add a section *Missing or Lost Receipts* outlining what to do when receipts could not be acquired or are lost.

### **Recommendation 4 from above**

7. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS- moved to Section 4

### **Additional Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 7**

- Add a section *Sales Tax Exemption*
  - Purchases made in Florida and for use in Florida are exempt from Sales and Use taxes. It is the department's cardholder and traveler's responsibility to be diligent in avoiding paying sales tax. A tax exempt form must be presented prior to or at the time of payment. The primary responsibility for adherence to this policy rests with the traveler incurring the business expense. They are to review the bill prior to check out and obtain a credit at that time. If it is not caught until later, the cardholder or traveler has the responsibility to attempt to recover sales tax reimbursement. If the merchant will not provide a refund, documentation stating they attempted to obtain the reimbursement must be provided. If a reimbursement for Sales and Use tax is due to the County, it is their responsibility to track and reconcile that the County received the refund from the merchant.
  - Provide a link to the Tax Exempt Certificate

## Approved Travel Policy Recommendations

- Provide references to the following policies:
  - Human Resources for specifics on labor considerations for labor hours documented for classified and exempt employees for travel under Section 4 (b)
  - Risk Policy for personal vehicle and County vehicle use under Section 4 (k) or (l)
  - Purchasing Policy of P-card Purchases under Section 5 (a)
- Develop a separate countywide *Procedures Manual* outlining how to document and submit a reimbursement request. Some of the items are suggested throughout these recommendations, but there needs to be more consistency among departments for reimbursement documentation and submittal.

### Goals referenced

The goals we intend to achieve with the approved recommendations are:

1. Provide policy clarity in understanding and structure;
2. Provide consistency in travel arrangement and reimbursement practices;
3. Better align with the State Statute provisions and federal guidelines; and
4. Provide long term policy sustainability.