

**Subject:**

Recommended Updates to the Board of County Commissioners Travel Policy.

**Summary:**

The “Guidelines for Payment and/or Reimbursement of Travel Expenses for Pinellas County Officers and Employees” (Travel Policy) was developed and written in 2003 and has not been updated since then. Various recommendations to update the policy are included in the attached presentation and detailed report. The recommendations were developed based on feedback from stakeholders including departments and agencies that utilize the policy, Clerk of the Circuit Court - Finance Division and Office of Inspector General. A revised policy will be brought forward for consideration based on feedback regarding the recommended updates.

**Staff Member Responsible:**

Erin Dowie, Department Administrative Manager, Office of Management & Budget

**Partners:**

Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller

# Travel Policy Update Recommendations

## Current State and Background

*The Guidelines for Payment and/or Reimbursement of Travel Expenses for Pinellas County Officers and Employees* <http://entsharepoint1/Clerk/clerksintranet/finance/AP/Document%20Library/TravelGuidelines.pdf> is the policy referenced for County travel. This policy was developed and written in 2003, prior to the implementation of the Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning system (OPUS). Due to the procedure shift away from specific forms coupled with changes in the way we travel and availability of new technology, a review to develop recommendations for modernizing this policy became necessary. The Office of Management and Budget put together a small project team to lead this effort.

## Review Methodology and Scope

1. Collect department feedback through Focus Groups- BCC departments were asked to identify key representatives from their work groups to participate in a series of focus groups. The project team held 3 focus groups with approximately 20 County representatives including 3 from Clerk's Finance. The focus of the groups was on structure and updates and omissions of the current policy. Names and departments were removed from feedback and key themes were developed to identify recommendations.
2. Review existing policies from Florida peers- The project team reviewed several peer travel and expense reimbursement policies to identify best practices and formats to consider. A common theme we discovered was many of our peers are experiencing the same need to modernize and update their policies.
3. Review Office of Inspector General P-card Audit recommendations applicable to Travel- The Inspector General completed a comprehensive Purchasing Card Usage audit <https://www.mypinellasclerk.org/Portals/0/Inspector%20General/rpts/2017/RPT2017-18.pdf> in October 2017 for the Board of County Commissioners, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, and the County Administrator to review current purchasing card policies and procedures. There were a few opportunities for improvement outlined in their final review considered in our review.
  - Purchasing card was used for expenses excluded under the Travel Policy.
  - Valet Parking Expenses are not excluded under the Travel Policy.
  - Travel guidelines do not reflect the current meals and incidental expenses rates being followed.
4. Partner with Clerk's Finance and integrate their policy review feedback- Although this is a Board of County Commissioners Policy, Clerk's Finance is the entity that assists the Board with enforcing the policy. The project team asked them to participate in the focus groups as well as provide an independent review of the policy.

## Recommendations by Policy Section

# Travel Policy Update Recommendations

## 1. PURPOSE AND POLICY

- Note that the policy or 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.

## 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 an independent mapping service shall be used selecting 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 add note this is the employee's assigned work location
- Revise *Post of Duty* to note a traveler's post of duty can change.

## 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.

## 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

## Travel Policy Update Recommendations

(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
  - Definitions of Classes and 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
  - 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 or travel coordinators trying to book travel.
    - Review the terms of the Travel Agency contract to evaluate the total cost benefit of utilizing their services. The use of travel agencies is becoming outdated due to the changes in technology and convenience of using search engines. It is often much easier and more efficient for departments to research and book their own travel.
  - Item (i) (4-5) Change Item name to *Hotels and Lodging*

## Travel Policy Update Recommendations

- 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 offered and explore the availability of government room rates in nearby hotels and rentals. This will allow travelers to use additional lodging options such as Home Away and Airbnb.
- In (4) add to the travel time threshold to include overnight booking for an end time of 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.
- 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.
  -
- 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*
  - 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 of 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.

## Travel Policy Update Recommendations

- 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.
- 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/aadir/reference\\_guide/Reference\\_Guide\\_For\\_State\\_Expenditures.pdf](https://www.myfloridacfo.com/aadir/reference_guide/Reference_Guide_For_State_Expenditures.pdf)
    - 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.

## Travel Policy Update Recommendations

- 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 charges 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/aadir/reference\\_guide/Reference\\_Guide\\_For\\_State\\_Expenditures.pdf](https://www.myfloridacfo.com/aadir/reference_guide/Reference_Guide_For_State_Expenditures.pdf)

### 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.”

### 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 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, supporting documentation, and has verified that all transactions are allowable expenses.”
- Remove all forms except for the *Form C-Local Travel Expenses* 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 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 acquiring their travel approval 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).

## Travel Policy Update Recommendations

- (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 how to address what to do when receipts could not be acquired or are lost. This was consistent feedback during the focus groups.

7. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS- suggested earlier to be moved to Section 4

### Additional Recommendations

- 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 and appropriate memorandum necessary. 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
- 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 between departments for reimbursement documentation and submittal.



# Travel Policy Update Recommendations

## Closing

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

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

We appreciate the opportunity to form this project team and provide recommendations for modernizing *The Guidelines for Payment and/or Reimbursement of Travel Expenses for Pinellas County Officers and Employees* and look forward to your feedback.

## Exhibits and Enclosures

Exhibit "A" Focus Group- Key Themes

Exhibit "B" Focus Group- Consolidated Feedback

Exhibit "C" Peer Travel Policy Index

Exhibit "D" Clerk's Finance Travel Policy Recommendations

## Exhibit "A"

### Focus Group Key Themes

#### General Questions

- Easy to navigate
- Suggest to house the policy on the OPUS IntraWeb
- Each department uses a different approval process and form for travel approval. Some departments have even created their own form.

#### Current Reimbursable Expenses (Section 4: Meals, Mileage and Incidentals)

- The Travel Classes are not relevant and need to be updated
- Specific amounts should not be referenced in the policy
- Tables A, B & C need to be updated or omitted
  - Table C-It is not easily understood where you can opt for a Standard Per Diem (Flat Rate) or M&IE rates.
- There needs to be more uniformity to how reimbursements are submitted
- The policy should reference a link directly to the GSA website instead of specific figures
- It needs to be more clear on when to use a personal vehicle vs a county vehicle

#### Parking

- Parking fee amounts need to be increased or more clearly defined
  - Current verbiage: "Appropriate memoranda from travelers if receipts are not obtained"
  - Suggested verbiage: "Use the most frugal means of parking"
  - It is often difficult to prove the parking options available

#### Telephone calls

- Outdated as telephone fees are not the same

#### Reasonable tips and gratuities

- Define what is reasonable
- Rates need to be looked at
- Provide a recommendation for each type or tip or allow a certain percentage/ cap for certain types

#### Portage Charges

- The fees need to be updated – a flat rate was suggested

#### Additional expenses recommended to be added:

- Uber and Lyft
- Wifi
- Baggage Fees
- Early Bird Check in

- Memo provided by Mark approving certain expenses not included in the Policy

#### Method of Payment (Section 5)

- Not every department allows advance payment options

#### Travel Approval (Section 6)- Forms and Advances

- This section is outdated
- There are several form options for departments to use and each department is doing their own thing
- There needs to be one consistent form for countywide use
- Preapproval is required but it needs to be more clearly defined and outlined
- Section 1(a)- “preapproval” needs to be clearly defined
- A reference guide of appropriate documentation should be included in the policy even though that is more procedure oriented.
- Every department has a different approval workflow

#### Travel Arrangements (Section 8)

- Every department is booking travel differently. Some are using the Travel Agency and some are not. Not every department was aware the County had a contract with a Travel Agency.
- “Want to Get Away” flights can be problematic even if they provide the cheapest rate because cancelled trips are nonrefundable.
- The County needs one travel coordinator to book everyone’s travel to get consistency.
- Departments are moving away from using the Travel Agency because it is easier and often less expensive to book themselves.
- The use of a Travel Agency is outdated due to the changes in technology and the easy convenience of using search engines.
- It is often hard to find hotels or utilize certain hotel blocks for events before they are booked up due to lag in travel approval time or lack of availability. Employees are often faced with deciding on convenience of conference vs low cost.
- The Travel Agency contract needs to be reviewed and the total cost/ benefit needs to be evaluated.

#### Additional IG Audit Questions

- Offsetting costs needs to be clearly defined- this primarily pertains to parking fees.
- The practice of attempting of getting items tax exempt such as hotels should be documented.
- Not every department has a tracking mechanism to follow up on attempted tax refunds.
- The approval group should be responsible for tracking and follow up on attempted tax refunds.
- It is not fully understood there are two reports for Travel and P-card where the Travel reimbursement shows the whole cost of the trip including P-card payments (these costs are backed out). This is a confusing concept to the department.
- How much are these costs looked at?

### Additional Questions

- Who is the approval authority and what are their limitations?
- What is the threshold of judgement by approving authorities and departments?
- Definitions and terms need to be updated. Example: Workshops should be added Vouchers should be omitted.
- What is the reimbursable cost for an employee staying with a family member for not booking a hotel or using Per Diem etc?
- What is the practice of Frequent Travelers miles and Rewards Points? It is not addressed in the policy. This is an ethics issue.
- Would like to see a Countywide Procedures Manual developed to create consistency for every department to follow.
- There should be references to the following policies:
  - Human Resources for specifics on labor considerations- classified vs exempt time
  - Risk Policy- for personal vehicle and county vehicle use
  - Purchasing Policy for P-card purchases
- Suggested each policy be reviewed to ensure discrepancies do not exist
- There is a feeling of inequities and misperceptions across departments because departments are left to interpret the policy on their own.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<b>General Questions</b>			
1. How familiar are you with the current travel policy?	Pretty familiar	Familiar From a high level view	Everyone stated they are familiar with the policy
2. Do you know where to find the policy?	Yes, from the training  No, I just search Travel Policy. It is not easy to find and not readily accessible.	Yes	Yes, but I feel it isn't in a good place. Suggestions to Pinellas County Intranet- Interweb.
3. How do you feel about the overall structure of the policy?	Yes, the flow and design is good.  Does not reflect revised date of any revisions made Definitions such a classes are not relevant anymore causing confusion Sometimes we have employees get confused when submitting their expense reports This makes it hard when conducting training because certain parts are outdated	The classes are outdated. We do not reference the classes anymore more than local or overnight. We need to redefine certain things based on how we have changed our travel submittals in OPUS etc.	Yes, it is ok. As time has changed, new travel features are not addressed- new sections and/or additions are needed.
4. Do you find it easy to navigate?	Yes		
5. What specific changes to the structure would you recommend?	See above questions		No, structure is fine, but sections need review for wording and updates
6. Does your department have an internal process for approval of travel?	Use an internal form for our department. The most recent update was completed this March 2018 to make it more uniform. The employee fills out the form and gets approval from supervisor and manager. After the Director approves, it goes back to me.  Use an internal form for our department. It starts with the budgeting process where it is defined with either a position or employee name and the traveler fills out the form for approval. Director only reviews all unbudgeted and out of state travel.  We use Travel Form A- we have a couple employees who travel local and not out of state. The employee fills it out and their admin staff ensures the director looks at it.  We have a digital form- a process is verbal prior to the digital form being filled out with an e-signature to include the documentation/ training. It all occurs online and moves to the proper chain of approval- member, supervisor etc.  Depending on which type of travel, local- we fill out a justification memo that goes to the Director for signature. Out of town state-use the A-1 Form to submit for approval. Sometimes we pre-fill it out in OPUS. These approvals are done prior to travel being approved. Sometimes the travel is booked to capture the lower room block prior to the pre-approval being completed. They would make the reservations for the hotel and cancel if for some reason the approval is not approved.	Utilize a travel checklist for authorization for all of the expense estimates. They submit this to their supervisor for approval and director prior to travel. Front end approval and use internal and County forms.  Receive a form for approval prior to when travel arrangements are made  Travel A-1/ A2 presented for ACA approval prior to travel arrangements are made  Justification memos are required for some travel in departments- this is not outlined in the Policy therefore, we get a lot of grey area submittals.	Yes, each representative stated they did. Each department does the approval differently.  Yes, approval is required first then travel arrangements are made  We created our own form to use for approval and another form with supplemental travel details
7. What approval form do you use?	Internal and External Forms are used  See above	A2 Form and do not know where it is located- but it is breakdown of the cos  See above	Yes, Interactive Travel A, B & C Forms for preapproval, Director gets the hard approval to review. Travel A of A2 Form and the travel justification memo to show how it ties to County. Does not know the Form numbers but know they use a form.
<b>Current Reimbursable Expense (Section 4- Meals, Mileage and Incidentals)</b>			
1. Is this section clear and easy to understand?	No, the Classes are not relevant anymore  The flow is good	Once you have debt with it is easier to understand. Some of the rates are out  We pull out the pieces that are relevant to us	No, from a traveler's perspective. Generates more questions than answers. If I were a new employee, it would difficult to understand. Specific amounts should not be in the policy in the Tables referencing M&IE rate It is not easily understood where you can opt for a Standard Per Diem (Flat Rate) or M&IE rates. Again, specific rates do not need to be listed as they change. Time for employees- time worked vs not worked. Travel to and From is not easily understood. It was mentioned these items are driven by HR policy in regards to Exempt vs Classified. Suggested we reference HR's link in the policy. Does not specify whether they should book where the conference is actually held vs. looking for hotels that are within that rates. Section E notes:

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

2. Are Tables A, B & C clear and easy to understand?

I do not use these tables as reference  
Table A- not useful because we normally just need to reference the agenda (continental breakfast and reception are two items that come up often). If it is included, we need to account for that. This needs to be more clearly defined.  
Table C is outdated  
Reference either the link or the verbiage of "refer to the CONUS rates"

The tables need to be reviewed and updated  
Class C table needs to be updated and have a reference on which one to use- Per diem flat rate or M & IE

Class C is not defined  
If you go for a day of training how is that labeled for a conference where Per Diem is reimbursed vs a day of training. Where is the difference stated?  
The rates in TABLE C are outdated  
Table A does not define Class C travel

3. One of the items that was pointed out on the IG Audit was that the current M & IE (This stands for Meals and Incidental Expenses) rates are not updated on policy. What do you feel is the best way to reference the most current M&IE rates? Are you familiar with where they current and last fiscal year rates are located?

No- they did not know it was listed on the Finance website  
You can either take the flat rate or the itemized M&IE rates. What is the cost savings for one or the other? The key is finding uniformity. The more we can offer that is rooted by a state statute it is to "defend" or stand against.  
The most frequent question the Finance department gets is the media calling requesting the costs for meals and tips fees.  
I prefer the flat rate because it is easier to justify.

The figures do not coordinate with the figures in OPUS and it causes confusion.  
Put the link to the GSA website or reference the website

Finance uses the CONUS rates and houses them on their site for current and last fiscal years- suggested to reference where it is housed on their website

4. Is the reimbursement of mileage clear and easy to understand? (k)

If the employee chooses to use their own vehicle for travel (not local) they would not get a reimbursement. As long as a County vehicle is available, they are responsible for the expenses. It was costing too much to pay for mileage and toll reimbursement.  
Case by case basis on when they use their personal and county vehicle.  
  
Proposed to reimburse gas receipts vs mileage rates.

No. I normally find it after I've searched for it for a long time.

Also suggested to provide a link directly to GSA on the Travel Policy

It is wordy and can be simplified

Traveler has to leave the office and go to Finance- instead of going back to work they went home... Section K review: "Mileage will be computed from the official headquarters or the traveler's home to the point of destination, whichever is shorter"  
Provide more examples: Section 4 (3)- gives an example

When to use a personal vehicle use vs County vehicle use authorization is not clear in the policy and needs to be outlined or better defined.

Define Commuting miles  
Use of personal vehicle vs County vehicle not outlined in the policy- currently it is verbal agreement  
Risk component- what if we get in an accident- Risk Management has a specific policy around the risk factors- suggested we can reference a link to their policy in the Travel policy.  
Whenever we are taking a County Vehicle out of the County, there is an out of County (Bay area) form to send to risk management- Procedural but should it be referenced in the policy?  
The Policy references to use the DOT maps but that is outdated. Attached Map Quest but some use Google Maps. Neither are listed in the policy. Supposed to be the shorter distance.

5. Looking at the "Other Expenses" section O, are there changes you would recommend to the following items?

Taxi and bus fares

Appropriate memoranda from the travelers if receipts not obtained is grey and needs to be better outlined

Parking or storage fees and tolls?

parking fees amount needs to be increased or more clearly defined. It is really hard for the traveler to provide proof of availability of parking options. Unless there is something written on the hotel documents that clearly states the options, it is hard to prove.  
"Verbiage, to use the most Frugal means of parking".

Valet Parking- Finance questions if there was other parking available but this is not outlined in the policy.

There are odds scenarios where alternative travel options have to be made such as taxi services to catch early flights rather than using a hotel shuttle service.

Telephone calls

Outdated because people use cell phones and telephone fees are not the same. Perhaps look at outlining Emergency situations where landlines, long distance is necessary.

Outdated

Outdated

Actual laundry and pressing expenses  
Actual and necessary fees charged to purchase traveler's checks  
Actual feeds charged to exchange currency

no feedback  
foreign travel  
foreign travel

Might be outdated. Perhaps change the wording to "laundry services"  
Only necessary for foreign travel.

Some hotels include it for free.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Reasonable tips and gratuities	Need to update the rates and take into account sometimes certain services will automatically add a certain percentage. The tip fees should be 18% as 15% is now outdated. Should this be across the board? Not certain. Does not feel there are many tips other than traveling and meals.	Provide a recommendation for a percentage or provide a cap for certain types. The example referenced: \$5 cap for all things except for meals.  Make it mandatory to supply a receipt for tips/ gratuities (incidentals).	What is reasonable? What do you do about pre disposed charges (Example give was Square where suggested gratuities are already listed). Suggested we can have a reference of tip % for certain items
Portage charges	No feedback.	These fees are much higher now and need to be updated	The amounts are outdated and need to be refreshed. Example, one department tips \$6 vs the \$5 in the policy. 1) What is appropriate memoranda- define what they mean by "appropriate" and "necessary" 6) It is tricky because you have to make sure it is used for County Business itself when you submit it. If they exchanged \$100 and only used \$80- they would be entitled for 80% of the receipts used. If they get a travel advance, want to make sure they spend all of their funds for OPUS submittal.
Additional Feedback on this section			
6. Referencing the same section, take into consideration how our travel needs have changed, are there additional expenses you feel need to be added?	Uber and Lyft  Wifi fees for when you are working. Required for Exempts to be available and accessible. Baggage fees- some airlines provide the first checked bag and some do not. Not everyone can bring everything needed in a carry-on bag. Suggested, the County pay the first checked bag if it is not offered with parameters. Example: "If there is a first bag fee, the County will reimburse the first bag fees". Early bird check-in should be looked at in terms of the pros and cons. What is the cost benefit to early bird check-in in terms of risk of losing the flight? Looking for the lowest travel rates to get the cheapest one.	Uber or Lyft ride sharing  Baggage fees  Pre boarding fees and Early Bird seating fees  Wifi if it is not part of the incidental reimbursement  Valet Telephone calls Portage fees need to be increased Examples will be good for department procedures but not necessarily in the policy requirements	Baggage, Early bird check in, Uber, Lyft, light rail, Carry on, wifi (sometimes you have to pay for it in hotel and/ or flight- issue comes up of whether you were working on County items), Airport parking Credit card fees ( One department directs their team to avoid paying certain fees with a credit card whenever possible) There is a memo approved and signed from Mark Woodard approving certain expenses not included in the Policy. One department includes this memo as back up, but not all departments were aware of this.
7. Are there expenses you feel are outdated or irrelevant?			Hard line telephone Foreign Travel- Personal Cell Phones vs Hard Line Phone calls
8. Are there unclear sections, visuals or references you would like to see additional or updated information on?			
<b>Method of Payment (Section 5)</b>			
1. Currently, there are 3 methods of payments for travel expenses: Paid in Advance, Direct pay to the vender by P-card and Reimbursement	For advances, it is important to communicate for employees to request ahead of time and try not to submit 100%. Recommended amount is 80% of the trip cost.	Yes, advance payments should be no more than 80% of the total estimated cost and in addition they need to reconcile within 10 days.	Some departments do not allow their employees to get an advance
2. What are the challenges associated with these methods of payment?	Some departments do not allow their employees to get advances	Yes, advances are problematic.	
<b>Travel Approval (Section 6)- Forms and Advances</b>			
1. Is this section clear and easy to understand?	This is outdated or not relevant anymore	We do not use all of the forms	Should not be called voucher forms- it is misleading Meal, Mileage and Incidentals are included in the advance. Do employees get reimbursed when driving to the airport for a trip? No, the link of where they are located needs to be included
2. Are you familiar with the different types of forms and where they are located?	One department does not use the form A1 and A2 anymore- they use and internal form Another does use the A1 form.  Some of them have been taken offline It has evolved a lot over the years. Every department is doing something different and using different forms. I could find the forms if I needed to	Yes, except A-2 is difficult to find. It used to be the 2nd page of the A1 form pre OPUS. This form needs to be used for the expense justification etc for travelers who do not have access to computer	
3. Are there any changes you would like to see to this section?	There are not consistent forms Countywide. Everyone does their own thing.  The primary thing is a pre-approval is required, but everyone does something different. Our group creates and iExpense report for their Travel and prints it for the proper approvals, saves it and will submit when they return.	In section 1 (a)- verbiage " if no advance is requested form is not required to be submitted to Finance" needs to be more clear or defined. Pre approval travel form should be mandatory and required for all travel.  Look at changing the name of Form A-1 from "Travel Request" to "Travel Authorization"	
4. Do you feel there needs to be a separate section regarding required documentation?	Yes, this will be helpful.	Yes, it would help everyone involved in the process	Yes

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	<p>Yes, a reference guide is beneficial with disclaimer to save all of your receipts</p> <p>Reference that photos of certain receipts such as taxi fees are acceptable documentation memoranda as long as it includes the proper information.</p>	<p>Having that reference would allow consistency countywide and assist the traveler in understanding their responsibilities and what is required</p> <p>One department created a department responsibilities checklist for pre and post travel responsibilities.</p> <p>Every time a form is referenced- provide a link of where it is housed</p> <p>A department has only two people who pay for travel on P-card. The rest of travelers use their personal card for reimbursement.</p> <p>Our department does not issue advances</p>	<p>Everyone should be using the same form.</p> <p>Some departments say no- nothing goes into OPUS unless it is already approved.</p> <p>The approval workflow is different for each department</p> <p>Some departments have preapproval for Travel through forms</p> <p>Why couldn't the whole thing be in OPUS- do we have the capacity to submit the request directly to approving managers? It was suggested to put it in OPUS prior and save instead of the submit- have the approver sign the cover sheet as the approval- this is part of the backup (in lieu of the form for approval).</p>

**Travel Arrangements (Section 8)**

<p>1. Do you experience challenges when trying to book, reserve or schedule travel?</p>	<p>If it is something across the County, I will go with the Travel Agent. Because we are required to use the cheapest rate, sometimes a flight is booked that is non-refundable or has a cancellation and we do not recoup the money. "Want to get away flights".</p> <p>Departments are moving away from using the Travel Agency because it is easier and cheaper to book themselves.</p> <p>They booked the flight and the onus was on the traveler to get their seat. The agency did not help them. It is easier to go online to look for the lowest and manage their own travel vs going through the Travel Agency. The Travel Agency is outdated. They do not take into account connect flight times, seat assignments and research time trying to find a reasonable flight.</p> <p>Not everyone knew there was Travel Agency contract.</p> <p>There is not a value to using the Travel Agency.</p> <p>With the change of technology, Travel Agencies are outdated.</p> <p>If we do not use the Travel Agency, a benchmark needs to be incorporated to ensure reasonable rates are used.</p> <p>Do not allow our employees to accrue mileage points/ frequent flyer miles because they do not feel they should benefit.</p> <p>If you do not book proactively for a conference sometimes you lose the low rates...and the biggest challenge is getting the approval before the blocks are reserved.</p> <p>Rental cars- employees do not know whether or not they should purchase the insurance policy for rental cars. Perhaps, vet and/or reference the risk policies.</p> <p>The contract needs to be looked at. The County needs to be more aggressive in the contract negotiations and looking holistically on the cost benefit analysis of all pieces involved.</p>	<p>The County needs their own travel coordinator to book everyone's travel to get consistency. They would know the policy and requirements.</p> <p>Not everyone uses the Travel agency</p> <p>There are ambiguities of when to use the Travel Agency</p> <p>Some departments did not know we had a contract with a Travel Agency</p> <p>Difficulty using the Travel Agency. Sometimes it is easier to do the research yourself rather than using them.</p> <p>We are supposed to use the contract and compare prices. If they are the lowest, then we are supposed to use them for a \$20 service fee. They also provide the assurance for cancellations etc.</p> <p>Travel Agencies are outdated because of the new conveniences of quick search engines and accessibility of information.</p> <p>Often difficult to find hotels for certain events. When hotels are booked up we end up going to higher rate hotels. You are faced with a decision to choose the cost benefit of booking close or booking farther away and commuting to the training location to get a lower rate.</p> <p>P-card vs Personal credit card Example: The employee has to book a rental car to get to and from training. They are required to use their personal card.</p>	<p>Yes, going through the Travel Agent. Sometimes we can find the fares cheaper ourselves and there is a time lag that sometimes causes us to miss certain reservations etc. Middle man syndrome. We ask them to get us a comparison for Finance and the supplier gets irritated because they know we are going to use the cheaper fare- this is one of the things that causes the time delay. They do not go to bat for travel issues if they are outside of 8-5.</p> <p>The policy outlines the cheapest airfare but we are supposed to use the Travel Agency.</p> <p>It is easier to book yourself and compare</p> <p>Some departments did not know there was a travel agent</p> <p>Look at the contract specifics and review specific items outlined</p> <p>Contract Expires in 2020-Look at the contract and the specific items outlined with the Travel Agent- Jim Just was the buyer.</p>
<p>2. Discuss suggestions on how to overcome challenges.</p>	<p>Outlined in previous question</p>	<p>Yes, it should be more clearly defined</p>	<p>If a certain type of parking such as Valet is the only option- it should be outlined. Some hotels/ event centers do not offer self-parking.</p>

**Additional IG Audit Questions**

<p>1. The IG Audit noted the practice of offsetting the cost of non-mandatory fees is currently not outlined in the Policy Ex: Valet vs Self-parking. Do you feel this should be included in the policy?</p>	<p>Outlined in previous question</p>	<p>Yes, it should be more clearly defined</p>	<p>If a certain type of parking such as Valet is the only option- it should be outlined. Some hotels/ event centers do not offer self-parking.</p>
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	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
2. Another item found is when a credit was not obtained for inappropriate charges or taxes assessed- Does your department have an internal process to track refunds and credits due?	<p>Try to send the Tax Exempt certificate proactively to all hotels to ensure they do not charge tax including the credit card authorization form.</p> <p>They contact the hotels directly and do not use sites to ensure they can get. They will at least attempt to submit the Tax Exempt form for other states. Some departments try to look at the government rate when it is lower.</p>	<p>If self-parking is not available it should be clearly stated on a receipt or some sort of documentation</p> <p>The places we have issues with are out of state</p> <p>One department has a spreadsheet to keep track of the reimbursable receipts. Not every department has tracking mechanism to follow up on refunds. Tax Exempt form, credit card authorization forms are submitted to hotels to</p>	<p>They try to get them removed after the fact.</p> <p>Travel authorization form for travelers who do not have a P-card- hotels Tax Exempt form for Florida – try to send it in ahead of time. Government Prevailing rates- Conferences being scheduled two years out- For travel costs, particularly hotel rates, some departments will review what is reasonable- justify the rates at the department level with the common sense approach- some departments put in the justification memo.</p>
3. Do you have suggestions on how to track these?	<p>The approval group should be responsible for tracking and following up</p> <p>Confirmation in e-mail of attempting to get the refund and use that as a reference to track the status of the reimbursement</p> <p>Perhaps put the verbiage in there of “attempting to get the refund” Form for Amazon that you can complete for a tax exemption on orders. Attendee sending me the form to send out to all of the attendees.</p>	<p>Suggested it is up to the individual P-card holder</p> <p>Have a separate tracking sheet for attempted reimbursement</p>	<p>Currently, this is something that needs to be addressed at the department Level. We could use a mechanism to track the expenses County Wide. We have one person submit travel reimbursement to help ensure the travel is booked appropriately. Some suppliers will give a discount in lieu of removing sales tax. This is rare. If it is not an option, it is notated in the justification/ comments of the iExpense submittal.</p>
4. Another item found was purchasing card expenses claimed with travel reimbursement. Do you have suggestions on how to monitor to prevent duplicate payment?	<p>The purpose of having all of the purchases on the Travel reimbursement is to see the full cost of the trip.</p> <p>Confusion on whether must itemize the sequence of the reimbursements that happened. For example, not itemizing each night of stay in a hotel and doing a lump sum for the in and out transactions. Make sure they make a lot of notes in the comments section. Purchasing software would be helpful©</p>	<p>No suggestions on tracking other than auditing internally</p> <p>When they bring their travel packet back, it has their confirmations and receipts to match</p>	<p>It is not fully understood that there are two separate reports for Travel and P-card.</p> <p>Some departments do not back out the expenses on the P-card.</p>

**Section 6: Additional Questions**

1. Are there items not defined or outlined in the Policy you would like to be included?	<p>If someone is on an advisory board or a professional organization and hold a professional seat such as committee chair etc and they are required:</p> <p>1. Attend a lunch, meeting or seminar</p> <p>2. Travel Should this be included in the policy for reimbursement? Example: a \$50 lunch or travel once or twice a year.</p> <p>The approval authority needs to be reviewed. Who should have the authority to make changes of items outside of the policy for reimbursement and also ensure employees are reimbursed for items they are entitled to.</p>	<p>The links for certain references</p> <p>There is ambiguity on whether the FL statute or the County Policy takes precedent. There is too much that is unclear and molded to the County and should align to the FL statute. Provide more references in the policy. Should there be a section where they submit a justification for a destination travel for local travel under 50 miles. **This becomes more of an issue of overriding authority of a policy section. This needs to be included in the policy.</p>	<p>Certain areas have changed the name of their events to workshops. Feels it should be included in the definitions.</p> <p>The term “Voucher” is outdated and needs to be removed or changed</p> <p>Is the private aircraft provision still relevant?</p>
2. What are the most frequent questions you have related to the policy?	<p>First time travelers not understanding reimbursable items.</p> <p>Ensuring personal credit card is used for incidentals</p> <p>Timecard questions when do and do not get paid. Frequent Travelers miles. Should they be allowed to use them? It is not outlined in the policy.</p>	<p>What is the reimbursable cost for an employee staying with a family member.....for not using the funds for Per Diem etc? Some departments do not have Petty Cash anymore, so there is more mileage reimbursements</p>	<p>What is the approval hierarchy for different types of travel- out of state and out of country travel? Appointing Authority Designee – clarification such as Mark Woodard approving all of CVBs travel. It has been designated for their Director to approve.</p>
3. Does this policy provide you the proper information to submit your iExpense report for reimbursement?		<p>This is more procedure based and should not be included in the policy.</p>	<p>Not covered, but we did discuss the desire for a County wide procedures policy</p>
4. Do gaps or inconsistencies exist between the Travel Policy and the Purchasing Policy and Procedure Manual?	<p>Contract Considerations</p>	<p>There are classes CBTs and training for this They have not experienced specific discrepancies</p>	<p>P-card Purchasing Policy states you cannot create accounts or use suppliers that store County P-card information such as Uber and Lyft.</p>

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
5. Does your department need assistance reviewing current or creating Travel Reimbursement Procedures?	<p>If they do leave before 6 they are entitled to breakfast and sometimes they are swayed to not leave, so they are not reimbursed...often at the disadvantage to the employee from a travel standpoint.</p> <p>Fort Meyers seminar is slightly greater than 50 miles, leaving at 4 am to get there are 7 to get checked into the seminar. The seminar ends at 5 and are requested to drive back to avoid 1 night hotel cost. Are they expected to leave at the risk of the employee to be cost effective?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Would like to see more consistent procedures county wide.</p>	<p>There are more issues with travelers not having a County P-card. i.e. not being able to get a Rental Car for someone who needed it without them using their Personal Card.</p> <p>No</p> <p>Advocate for one procedure manual to County wide use instead of each department developing their own.</p>	<p>HR policy and Travel Policy has inconsistencies also exist. This references classified hours vs Exempt Hours. Suggested all policies are reviewed to ensure they are consistent.</p>

**Section 7: Closing Statements**

1. Is there anything we should've talked about but didn't?	<p>Include an FAQ for the policy</p>	<p>The Purchasing P-card Policy needs to be looked at and addressed. There are inconsistencies that exist.</p> <p>The P-card training and Travel training should be combined and or mandatory for every traveler and P-card holder.</p> <p>P-card holders do not understand the paperwork and documentation necessary to submit for their iExpense reports and/or approved P-cards purchases. The compliance training does not outline it.</p> <p>Information is not being communicated completely between Purchasing and Finance. Items are open to interpretation.</p> <p>Bottom line- most economical way of travel should be taken into consideration to conduct County Business</p>	<p>We are tax exempt for Florida and sometimes outside states, organizations do not accept tax exempt status</p> <p>Would like to see standard procedures countywide to follow the requirements. Feel like there are inequities and misperceptions across departments and internally to departments because the departments are left to create or interpret the policy their own way.</p> <p>Rewards Point- Personal earnings, is this an ethics issue? Where is this outlined in the Policy?</p> <p>We are supposed to look at the Travel Agency to book for the County Travel. The Agency is going to find the cheaper flight price- We should look at the overall true cost for layovers, baggage feeds, research time etc.</p> <p>The current supplier does not utilize St. Pete Airport for flights.</p> <p>If you can show a substantial difference of savings, then you can book yourself and not use the Travel Agency- some departments do all of the footwork and send it to the Supplier.</p> <p>A contract review of our Travel agency needs to be looked at.</p> <p>Travel agency is antiquated- what is the risk involved for cancellations etc. What is the cost benefit to use the agency vs True cost?</p> <p>Local Mileage clarification- Post of Duty is the key item to review when looking at mileage reimbursement- where you are assigned to work for the day or parts of the day. Example: Tropicana Field in Service Day (that was their post of duty at the beginning of the day)- the trip there was not reimbursed...if they go to work after...the mileage to work is reimbursed.</p> <p>Conference- technical verbiage for the meals and definitions for Per Diem reimbursement needs to be looked at and possibly defined more clearly</p>
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## Exhibit "C"

### Peer Travel Policy Index

The following travel and reimbursement policies were reviewed to identify best practices and structure formats to consider:

- Florida Statute: [112.061 Per diem and travel expenses of public officers, employees and authorized persons](#)
- Hillsborough County
- Pasco County
- Orange County
- Citrus County
- Brevard County Sheriff's Office
- City of Belleair Bluffs- Resolution No. 2010-10 Travel Expense Policy
- City of Dunwoody Georgia- Travel Policy Date 10-11-2010
- City of Fort Lauderdale
- City of Melbourne Expense Reimbursement
- City of Pembroke
- Clearwater Travel
- Suncoast- Business Expense Reimbursement
- Flagler County Travel Policy

## Exhibit "D"

### Clerk's Finance Travel Policy Recommendations

#### 2. Definitions – Include/revise definitions for:

- Classes of Travel – include foreign
- Remove DOT Map Mileage
- Include Local Mileage
- Include Out of Town Mileage
- Including Commuting Mileage
- Revise Post of Duty to include that it can change
- Foreign travel - OCONUS rates – updated monthly
- Vicinity mileage - remove

#### 3. Approval for Travel

- Construction Licensing Board may need to be updated

#### 4. Reimbursable Expenses

- Item a. (1) should be replaced with reference to F.S. 112.061 (6)(a) which is included under definitions as per diem rate. Do not include specific dollar amount so that policy does not need to be changed when the statute changes. Statute currently allows \$80. Include that first and last day of travel are paid at 75% of rate.
- Item a.(2) should have statute reference instead of \$60.
- Item e remove Table C and include reference to CONUS rates on Pinellas County Intranet.
- Item k
  - Remove reference to DOT mileage chart, use of that chart and vicinity mileage. Replace with Mapquest using least number of miles
  - Split out into local mileage and out of town mileage
  - Local mileage – include policy regarding commuting mile
  - Local Mileage – define area that is included in local mileage. Is it xx number of miles or certain surrounding counties?
  - Out of town mileage keep as “computed from the official headquarters or the traveler’s home to the point of destination, whichever is shorter.”
  - Clarification of driving to temporary work assignments
  - Remove sentence that changes are effective January 1<sup>st</sup>. It would be effective as dictated by the IRS which is stated in the prior sentence.
- Item o – Increase dollar amount requiring a receipt for taxi, tolls and parking? State allows \$25 per transaction.

#### 6. Travel Reimbursement Voucher Forms

Remove all forms except Local Travel Expenses and replace with using iExpense or departmental form to estimate costs and obtain pre-approval of trip. The Local Travel Expense form is used ONLY when being reimbursed through petty cash.

#### 8. Travel Arrangements

It states that the travel agency **shall** be used but then later states they **should be** given the opportunity to meet the best price available.

## **GUIDELINES FOR PAYMENT AND/OR REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR PINELLAS COUNTY OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES**

### 1. PURPOSE AND POLICY.

The purpose of these guidelines is to foster equity, uniformity and efficiency in the payment and/or reimbursement of authorized travel expenses for officers and employees within Pinellas County government. All authorized County travel shall be by the most economical means taking into account the employee's time involved, the purpose of the travel, and the distance involved. If a traveler utilizes his/her privately owned vehicle that results in more travel reimbursement in total than would have been the case had a commercial carrier been utilized, the reimbursement shall be limited to the total cost of the trip if a commercial carrier had been utilized.

In accordance with F.S. 112.061(3)(e) foreign travel shall be paid at the current rates as specified in the federal publication "Standardized Regulations (Government Civilians, Foreign Areas)".

### 2. DEFINITIONS:

- a. *Approving Authority* - The agency head or designated representative who must authorize and approve travel in accordance with §112.061(3)(a), F.S., and these guidelines.
- b. *Classes of Travel* - The following classes of travel, as provided for in Florida Statutes §112.061, shall be applicable to County travel:
  - (1) *Class A Travel* - is continuous travel of 24 hours or more away from official headquarters.
  - (2) *Class B Travel* - is continuous travel of less than 24 hours which involves an overnight absence from official headquarters.
  - (3) *Class C Travel* - is travel for short or day trips where the traveler is not required to be away from his official headquarters overnight.
- c. *Conference* - Means the coming together of persons with a common interest or interests disputes and for discussion of their common problems and interests. The term also includes similar meetings such as seminars and workshops which are large formal groups for the purpose of deliberation, exchange of ideas/views, or for the removal of differences or meetings that are programmed and supervised to accomplish intensive research, study, discussion and work in some field or on a governmental problem or problems. A conference does not mean the coming together of agency or interagency personnel.
- d. *Convention* - Means an assembly of a group of persons representing persons and groups, coming together for the accomplishment of a purpose of interest to a larger group or groups. A convention does not mean the coming together of agency or interagency personnel.
- e. *DOT Map Mileage* - mileage which is published annually by the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) or available on the state website at [www3.dot.state.fl.us/mileage](http://www3.dot.state.fl.us/mileage).

- f. *Emergency Notice* – Means for purposes of §112.061(13), F.S., notification of less than twenty-four (24) hours prior to scheduled departure. Such notification may be oral or written.
- g. *Emergency Situation* - Circumstances in which there is an immediate danger or a threat of immediate danger to the public health, safety or welfare or of other substantial loss to the County requiring emergency action.
- h. *Individual with a Disability* - Means any person determined as having a disability, as defined at 25 CFR, §35.104(4), including but not limited to blindness, or the loss of one or more life functions leaving that person mobility-impaired (or sensory-impaired) requiring the use of trained animal companions or prosthetic equipment, including, but not limited to, crutches, walkers, canes or wheelchairs, and including temporary conditions requiring any of the above.
- i. *Meal and Incidental Expense Rate* – Means the Federal Meal and Incidental Expense Rate (M & IE) authorized under the Federal Travel Regulation in Appendix A, 41 CFR, Chapter 301, for travel within the Continental United States (“CONUS”). This should cover meals and out of pocket expenses such as tips for mandatory valet parking, hotel staff, etc.
- j. *Most Economical Class of Transportation* - Means the class having the lowest fare which is available.
- k. *Most Economical Method of Travel* - Means the mode of transportation (County-owned vehicle, privately owned vehicle, common carrier, etc.) designated by an agency head in accordance with the criteria prescribed by §112.061, F.S., and these guidelines.
- l. *Non-business Day* - for a public officer or employee, a weekend or other "off" day, or an authorized County holiday; for an authorized person other than an officer or employee, i.e. contracted worker, means a day on which such person was not scheduled to be performing service or contributing time to an agency.
- m. *Official Headquarters* - means the geographic location specified by §112.061(4), F.S.
- n. *Per Diem Rate* - means the amount authorized by §112.061(6)(a), F.S.
- o. *Personal Time* - means the time outside the regular working hours of a business day, a non-business day, or a day for which the officer or employee had prior approval for a leave of absence.
- p. *Point of Origin* - Means the geographic location of the traveler's official headquarters or the geographic location where travel begins, whichever is the lesser distance from the destination.
- q. *Post of Duty* - The traveler's usually assigned work location.
- r. *Travel Day* - A period of 24 hours consisting of four quarters of six hours each.

- s. *Traveler* - A public officer, employee, or authorized person, when performing authorized travel.
- t. *Travel Period* - A period of time between time of departure and time of return.
- u. *Vicinity Mileage* - Mileage incurred while on official County business which is not published in the official DOT road map mileage table.

3. APPROVAL FOR TRAVEL.

- a. All the appointed officials and employees must have both prior approval for travel and approval by supervisors for actual travel expenses incurred. Appointed officials serving Boards should obtain approval of travel reimbursement vouchers from the Chairman of their governing Board, unless otherwise provided by these guidelines. All other County employees should obtain approval from their department head and their Appointing Authority or his/her designee.
- b. The County Administrator or his/her designee must approve all travel as the Approving Authority except for the following officials, agencies or departments:

<u>Officials/Agencies/Departments</u>	<u>Approval Authority for Department or Agency Head</u>
(1) Office of Human Rights (Director only)	Chairman of Affirmative Action Committee
(2) Information Technology (Director only)	Chairman of IT Board
(3) Judges	Chief Judge
(4) County Commissioners	Self
(5) County Attorney (Agency Head only)	Chairman of Board of County Commissioners
(6) Personnel (Director only)	Chairman of Personnel Board
(7) CVB	Asst. County Administrator
(8) Legislative Delegation	Chairman of Legislative Delegation
(9) Constitutional Officers (Judges excluded)	Self
(10) Construction Licensing Board (Director only)	Chairman of Licensing Board
(11) Law Library	Court Administrator

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| (12) | Court Agencies                             | Court Administrator or Chief Judge        |
| (13) | County Administrator<br>(Agency Head only) | Chairman of Board of County Commissioners |

For the purposes of these guidelines and travel authorization approval, the heads of the above-listed agencies or departments are the Approving Authorities who are hereby designated as the representatives who are authorized to approve travel for their respective employees pursuant to §112.061(3)(a).

- c. Clerk's employees' travel must be approved by the department head and the Clerk.
- d. All Judges' travel should be approved by the Chief Judge.
- e. Except for reimbursement for mileage or tolls up to \$50.00 once per month, per employee, petty cash will not be used to reimburse travel expenses under these guidelines. In the event such petty cash reimbursement is made, appropriate documentation shall be attached to the petty cash reimbursement voucher.

4. REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES.

- a. All travelers shall be allowed subsistence when traveling to a convention or conference or when traveling within or outside the state in order to conduct bona fide County business, when the convention, conference, or business serves a direct and lawful public purpose with relation to the public agency served by the person attending such meeting or conducting such business. The following shall be paid for each day of such travel, depending upon its application, at the option of the traveler:
  - (1) Sixty dollars per diem (Class A or B travel only); paid receipts not required, maximum of \$60.00 per 24-hour period. For day of departure and return, if less than 24 hours, \$45.00 per day, receipts not required, shall be allowed, or
  - (2) If actual expenses exceed \$60.00, the amounts permitted below for meals, plus actual expenses for lodging at a single occupancy rate, which rates shall be substantiated by paid bills therefor.
  - (3) Travelers on Class A travel, including witnesses who have been subpoenaed for testimony by the Public Defender or State Attorney, may switch back and forth between the above options, provided they do not receive overlapping payment during any 24-hour, midnight to midnight period. For example, if a traveler flies to Washington and arrives at 7:00 P.M. and stays at a hotel, he/she may opt to have hotel and meal expenses reimbursed and at midnight switch to per diem and not have the next day's lodging/meals reimbursed.



- b. All travelers (Class A and B travel) shall be allowed the Federal M & IE Rates listed on the Federal M & IE Rate Table (Appendix A – current version) for various locations in the Continental United States (CONUS). For the localities not listed, the rate shall be the standard CONUS rate for meals and incidentals. For locations not listed as destinations, county and/or other defined locations per the Federal M & IE Rate Table, the standard CONUS rate will be applied. The rates shall change in accordance with the changes in the CONUS rates. Changes will be effective October 1 of each year, or if not available as of that date, as soon as available thereafter. The Federal M & IE rates for CONUS localities may be viewed on the Pinellas County intranet. The traveler is allowed 75% of the M & IE rate on the day of departure and the day of return, and 100% of the M & IE rate for all full days of travel. If travel is for more than 12 hours, but less than 24 hours and includes an overnight stay, the traveler is allowed 75% of the M & IE rate as show in the following table.

**TABLE A**

<b>When travel is:</b>		<b>Your allowance is :</b>
<b>Class A</b>  24 hours or more	The day of departure	75% of the applicable M&IE rate
	Full days of travel	100% of the applicable M&IE rate
	The last day of travel	75% of the applicable M&IE rate
<b>Class B</b>  Continuous travel less than 24 hours involving an overnight stay		75% of the applicable M&IE rate.

(NOTE: These figures are established in accordance with §112.061, F.S., and are subject to change by amendment of this policy. The time travel begins shall be the actual time the employees leave their address to start their travel unless they are required to begin travel from another designated location.)

- c. There will be no reimbursement for meals and/or lodging which has been included in a convention or conference registration fee or airline ticket. This includes "continental breakfasts." Deductions shall be made in accordance with Table C. However, reimbursement may be permitted if the traveler is unable to consume the meal included in the registration or airline ticket due to medical reasons or religious reasons. The traveler should attach and sign a certification stating "The food could not be consumed for religious or medical reasons."

- d. There will be no reimbursement of lodging within a 50-mile radius of the traveler's official headquarters unless the Approving Authority provides a written justification of extenuating circumstances requiring such lodging. Examples of extenuating circumstances would be an "around the clock" requirement to be available to assist in conduct of the seminar/convention; special duties requiring attendance at evening meetings; savings to the County from overtime not incurred; etc.
- e. No subsistence for meals shall be provided for Class C travel within a 50-mile radius of the traveler's official headquarters, unless travel has been approved to attend a conference or convention. Otherwise, Class C travelers shall be allowed reimbursement for meals, according to the following table:

**TABLE B**

<b>Meal</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Travel begins before:</b>	<b>And extends beyond:</b>
Breakfast	See M & IE Rates	6:00 A.M.	8:00 A.M
Lunch	On Table C	Noon	2:00 P.M.
Dinner		6:00 P.M.	8:00 P.M.

**TABLE C**

M & IE	\$31	\$35	\$39	\$43	\$47	\$51
Breakfast	6	7	8	9	9	10
Lunch	6	7	8	9	11	12
Dinner	16	18	20	22	24	26
Incidentals	3	3	3	3	3	3

Miscellaneous incidental expense is not allowable for Class C travel. Other incidental expenses, outlined in section 4(o) of this policy may be allowed. All Class C meal reimbursement shall be taxable to the traveler. No advances will be provided to employees for subsistence (meals) for Class C travel.

- f. Airline fare shall be scheduled through the contracted travel agency and reimbursed by the respective Approving Authority on the basis of the lowest fare available, unless the Approving Authority determines that utilizing the lowest fare would seriously hinder the purpose of the trip or a different fare is required due to other public duties which the traveler must perform. Airline ticket stubs and air itineraries are to be attached to reimbursement requests.
- g. Cancellation of non-refundable airline tickets. Cancellation of non-refundable airline tickets shall only be authorized where the Approving Authority determines that such cancellation is in the best interest of the County. Such cancellations should be immediately noticed to the Finance Division with a written explanation detailing the circumstances requiring cancellation. If a cancellation is made without such justification, the cancellation penalty shall not be paid or reimbursed by the County.

- h. Additional costs Incurred by travelers. Where additional costs are incurred by travelers due to airline overbooking, and the traveler wishes to have such costs paid directly or indirectly by the County, then any compensation, in whatever form, received by the traveler from the airline for such inconvenience shall be turned over to the County. If the traveler is allowed to elect the form of compensation from the airline, his/her decision shall be based upon the best interests of the County. If additional costs are borne by the traveler, then such compensation from the airline shall accrue to the traveler.
- i. Attendance at conferences and conventions. Approving Authorities may authorize the expenditure of public funds for attendance at conferences and/or conventions where:
- (1) The main purpose for the conference or convention relates to the performance of statutory duties and responsibilities of the Approving Authority's department or agency; and
  - (2) Attending the conference or convention will benefit the individual attending in the performance of his/her public duties.
  - (3) Fees for attending events such as a banquet or other function where the employee is receiving an award on behalf of Pinellas County or serving in an administrative capacity on behalf of Pinellas County, may be reimbursed upon the adoption of a resolution by the Board in advance with a finding the event serves a public purpose under ordinance No. 00-16.
  - (4) Travel, including overnight lodging, prior to each day of attendance at an authorized conference or convention shall only be reimbursed if the traveler would have to depart his home or post of duty prior to 6:00 A.M. on the scheduled date of the conference or convention in order to attend on time. Exceptions to this rule may be permitted only if the traveler must perform duties and/or preparation at the conference or convention site prior to the scheduled beginning date, or the approving authority determines such travel is necessary to further the public purpose in the attendance by the employee at the conference or convention. The Approving Authority shall submit an explanatory memorandum in such cases with the reimbursement request. This rule shall not apply to instances where, due to an employee's or officer's duties, it is regularly required that they travel on evenings prior to performance of scheduled work the following day.
  - 5) A traveler may, at the discretion of the Appointing Authority, be asked to leave a day early or stay a day later, with per diem or actual expenses paid by the County, in order to take advantage of a cheaper air fare, provided the savings there from will more than cover additional expenses incurred.
- j. Registration Fees. Registration Fees are reimbursable, provided the conference/convention requirements of these guidelines are met. However, no reimbursement shall be made for meals included in such registration fees. If available, an agency or program schedule along with a receipt must be attached when requesting

reimbursement. If not available, a statement explaining that a schedule was not provided is required.

- k. Mileage for use of Privately owned vehicles. Where travelers are authorized to use their privately owned vehicles for any category of travel on official County business, they shall receive reimbursement at the rates announced by the IRS as the standard mileage rates for computing the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business purposes. The rate shall change with IRS announced changes. Changes will be made effective January 1 following a change announced by the IRS. The mileage between the point of origin and the point of destination will be based upon the current Department of Transportation mileage chart when possible, otherwise the traveler's actual odometer mileage may be used. If travelers incur actual authorized mileage in excess of the DOT mileage, (up to a limit of ten (10) miles) they shall reflect such mileage as "vicinity mileage" on the appropriate travel form and they will be reimbursed for such mileage, provided it is approved by the Approving Authority. Vicinity mileage in excess of ten (10) miles may be approved if accompanied by information which details the locations visited, the public business performed and the actual mileage incurred. Mileage will be computed from the official headquarters or the traveler's home to the point of destination, whichever is shorter.

The Finance Division may establish distances between various posts of duty within the County and frequently traveled to locations within the immediate vicinity of the County. Once established, travelers shall be limited to mileage reimbursement based upon those established mileages. If there is no established distance, the traveler's actual mileage will be reimbursed for travel within the County.

Requests for reimbursement submitted by travelers for Class C travel may be submitted monthly, but, in any event, not later than quarterly. Requests for travel reimbursement must be received not later than sixty (60) days following the end of the fiscal year within which the travel occurred.

Approving Authorities, in lieu of reimbursing mileage under the above procedures, may grant monthly allowances in fixed amounts for the use of privately owned vehicles as provided for in F.S. §112.061(7)(f).

l. Rental Cars.

- (1) Rental cars may be utilized when County-owned vehicles are not available for the required use or when use of a County-owned vehicle is impractical, and the anticipated cost of using a commercial carrier will exceed the cost of the rental car.
- (2) Rental cars should be handled in advance of the trip and always through a contracted travel agency contracted with by the county. Documentation shall be provided by the Appointing Authority when reimbursement is sought justifying the use of a rental vehicle. The state contract for rental cars should be used whenever possible where the daily cost includes third party liability coverage. When rental cars are not available through the state contract, employees are encouraged to purchase \$100,000/\$300,000 bodily injury

coverage per occurrence and \$50,000 property damage per occurrence to reduce exposure to the Risk Management Fund.

- m. Private Aircraft for Business Travel. No private aircraft of any kind owned by an individual, County employee or business other than the County will be piloted by a County employee, while on County business unless:
- (1) Approval is received from the department director, constitutional official, the office of the County Administrator (as may be applicable), and the director of Risk Management.
  - (2) The County employee who may be the pilot of said aircraft must be approved and named as the qualified licensed pilot on the County's aircraft liability policy, whether the aircraft be owned or not owned by the County and being operated during the course of County business.
  - (3) Employees will be reimbursed for reasonable costs when it is proven to be cost effective and clearly demonstrated to be cost effective. A comparison based on the County's travel agency quote must be provided.
- n. Different Travel for Convenience. In the event that a traveler, for his/her own convenience, either departs from or returns to his/her post of duty at a time or by a different route than he/she normally would, had he/she departed immediately prior to or immediately after a meeting or conference, all per diem, mileage and airfare reimbursement shall be calculated as though the traveler departed immediately prior to or after the event using the first available transportation.
- o. Other Expenses. The following expenses shall be refunded, provided the cited documentation is attached:
- (1) Taxi and bus fares. Receipts for fares in excess of \$15.00 shall be required, other fares of lesser amounts shall be accounted for by appropriate memoranda from the traveler if receipts are not obtained.
  - (2) Parking or storage fees and tolls. Parking or storage fees and tolls shall be reimbursed and, if the amount is in excess of \$10.00, receipts must be provided or, if no receipts were provided, traveler shall submit an explanatory memorandum.
  - (3) Telephone calls. Telephone calls shall be reimbursed if made for official County business. Appropriate receipts should be provided, such as lodging receipts reflecting the calls. Business calls should be detailed with the person called and the nature of the business.
  - (4) Actual laundry and pressing expenses. The costs of actual laundry and pressing expenses may be reimbursed if the traveler's stay exceeds seven (7) days and such expenses are necessary to complete the assigned travel. Receipts shall be required if laundromats are utilized, travelers shall submit documentation reflecting their actual expenses incurred.

- (5) Actual and necessary fees charged to purchase traveler's checks. The costs of purchasing traveler's checks for official travel expenses shall be reimbursed. Receipts shall be required.
- (6) Actual fees charged to exchange currency. The actual and necessary costs of fees to exchange currencies incurred during official travel shall be reimbursed. Receipts shall be required.
- (7) Reasonable tips and gratuities may be reimbursed to the traveler for actual tips paid to taxi drivers which shall not exceed 15% of the fare.
- (8) Actual portage charges paid which shall not exceed \$1 per bag, not to exceed total of \$5.00

5. METHOD OF PAYMENT FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES.

- a. Travel expenses may be paid by advance, direct paid to the vendor by County purchasing card or by reimbursement.
- b. Travel Advances.
  - (1) Travelers shall not have travel advances outstanding for more than one trip at any time without written justification of the circumstances necessitating such travel advances.
  - (2) Travel advances will not be provided to requesting travelers until the check date immediately prior to the scheduled travel.
  - (3) If travelers spend less than estimated advanced funds, the Approving Authority shall make such a determination and obtain a refund from the traveler and provide same to the Finance Department within five working days of the traveler's return to his/her post of duty, unless circumstances beyond the traveler's control, prevent it. Failure to comply with this time requirement may result in a forfeiture by the affected travelers of the right to receive travel advances for a period of six months from the date of such travel.

6. TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT VOUCHER FORMS.

- a. The Board utilizes three voucher reimbursement forms. These forms are:
  - (1) *Form A-1 – Travel Request* – this form is used to:
    - (a) obtain advance approval for travel where airfare, hotel or registration is prepaid by check or the County P-Card; if no advance is requested form is not required to be submitted to Finance.

- (b) request payment for registrations for meetings; conventions; and hotel costs, in advance of the actual event;
  - (c) request in advance for travel which is authorized by §112.061(12) and these guidelines. This section authorizes advancement of County funds to cover anticipated costs of travel. Travel advances are not disbursed to the employee until the check date immediately prior to the traveler's departure date.
- b. *Form A-2 - Estimate of Travel Costs* – this form is used to:
    - (a) *provide management with anticipated costs of travel which may include airfare, hotel, registration, mileage and meals etc.*
    - (b) *provide any additional explanations for unusual planned expenses.*
  - c. *Form B – Not in Use.*
  - d. *Form C - Local Travel Expenses* - this form is used to obtain reimbursement for Class C travel and includes only mileage, local parking and tolls. This form should be self-explanatory.
  - e. *Form D - Travel Reimbursement Voucher* - this form is used to account for travel advances and obtain reimbursement for all but Class C travel expenses, which are reimbursed on Form C. Instructions for the form preparation are printed on a separate sheet which is distributed with Form D.

7. TRAVEL EXPENSES BY OFFICERS/EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.

When travelers having disabilities incur expenses in excess of those ordinarily authorized pursuant to travel law and these guidelines, and such excess travel expenses were incurred to permit the safe travel of such traveler, the excess expenses shall be reimbursed to the extent that the expenses are reasonable and necessary for the safe travel of the individual. All such claims for reimbursement shall require a written memorandum from the Approving Authority detailing the excess travel expenses and the reasons therefor.

8. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS.

All departments and agencies shall utilize the travel agency designated by the County for arranging County travel, whenever possible unless prevented by an emergency or unusual circumstances which are documented by the Approving Authority. These services shall include airline tickets, lodging and rental cars, however, lodging or airfare may be arranged directly by an Appointing Authority utilizing the County's purchasing card when doing so is determined to be more economical and expeditious. The travel agency should be given an opportunity to meet the best price available. Any questions or disagreements regarding fares should be handled directly by the department with the travel agency.

9. JUDGES' TRAVEL.

As State employees, most judicial travel should be reimbursed by the State; however, Board funds may be used for Judges and related court personnel travel, dues and subscriptions when not paid by the State. The Chief Judge will insure that funding for judicial travel is not available from the State before billing the County. When this is the case, travel expenditures will be paid in accordance with §112.061 as authorized by the Chief Circuit Judge, including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Membership Dues for the Judges to the Conference of County Court Judges or the Conference of Circuit Court Judges.
- b. Travel to Summer Business Meeting of the Conference of County Court Judges usually held in June.
- c. Visits to other court systems to review procedures for improvements to the court system.
- d. Educational meetings or seminars being attended that are on the list approved for funding by the Florida Court Education Council, but for which State funds are not available.

10. EFFECTIVE DATE.

These guidelines shall become effective November 1, 2003.

10/7/03

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