

Stephen F. Austin State University Travel Guidelines

March 2021

Applicability

These Stephen F. Austin State University Travel Guidelines (Travel Guidelines) are authorized by Stephen F. Austin State University Board of Regents [Policy 3.29, Travel](#). Unless otherwise stated, these Travel Guidelines apply to anyone traveling in a university capacity, including employees, students, and prospective employees, except members of the Board of Regents, the president, and intercollegiate athletics. Guidelines are subject to change at any time, notification of changes will be posted on SFA travel website, Travel list serv email and Company Notes section in Concur.

All policies, rules, and regulations related to travel on behalf of, or in connection with, intercollegiate athletics are located in the current issue of the Intercollegiate Athletics Policy & Procedure Manual.

Travel expenses related to contracts and grant funding (federal, state, local, or private) shall be reimbursed on the same basis as travel paid from other university funds, except when the terms of the contract or grant specify otherwise.

General Travel Regulations

Generally, the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (TCPA) is the authoritative source regarding travel. TCPA travel rules ([Textravel](#)) are available from a link on the [travel office website](#). SFA Travel Guidelines take precedence except where Texas law prevails. The university shall make every reasonable effort to minimize the amount of travel expenses paid and/or reimbursed, and to ensure that each travel arrangement is the most cost-effective considering all relevant circumstances.

Travelers are responsible for ensuring their travel complies with applicable law and these Travel Guidelines. Failure to comply may result in reimbursement delays and/or rejection of the traveler's claim for travel reimbursement. Fraudulent travel claims will be grounds for disciplinary action, including termination.

Employees and others traveling on behalf of the university are reimbursed for actual lodging expenses and on a per diem basis for meals up to the maximum allowable rates, subject to the provisions of these Travel Guidelines. (See the Reimbursement Rates sections, below. See the Student and Other Group Travel section, below, for meal receipt requirement.) In most cases of employees traveling together, each must pay and claim reimbursement for his/her own expenses (except taxi or limousine expenses or when a hotel room is shared by more than one employee – see the Incidental Expenses and Shared Lodging sections, below). Expenses will be reimbursed after the trip is completed and a properly documented travel expense report is submitted (see the Travel Expense Report section, below, for exceptions).

Tips and gratuities are generally not reimbursable. (See the Student and Other Group Travel

section, below, for exception.) The applicable account manager/financial manager may limit or prohibit reimbursement of any travel expenditure provided the traveler is notified in advance.

While the state may allow the use of Educational and General (E&G) funds for some types of travel, the university's local policy is that **no E&G funds may be used for travel.**

Travel Request

Except as stated in the Applicability section of these Travel Guidelines, above, anyone traveling on university business must obtain permission in advance of the trip. Travel requests must be submitted online through Concur and according to the instructions in the travel training manuals available on the [travel office website](#). All estimated business expenses of the trip must be detailed on the travel request regardless of payment method. A travel request must be submitted and approved at all applicable levels even if no travel expenses are anticipated.

The online travel request may be initiated only when account balances are sufficient to cover the total estimated cost of the trip. Whenever possible, the travel request should be entered and approved at least seven (7) working days prior to departure.

Blanket Travel Request

A blanket travel request is a continuing authority to travel when the job duties require numerous repetitive trips for the same purpose. Under this scenario and on a case-by-case basis, the travel office may approve a blanket travel request for the traveler covering a specific period of time (e.g., month, semester, or fiscal year). Each blanket travel request must indicate the purpose of travel and the destinations.

Blanket travel requests are not allowed for travel outside the United States, groups of travelers, or when airfare costs are involved.

Travel expense reports should be submitted on a weekly or monthly basis for employees on continuous travel. A blanket travel request will remain open for the specific period of time indicated. Departments will be responsible for closing the blanket travel request.

Travel to Washington, D.C.

Regardless of the purpose of the travel, an employee planning to travel to Washington, D.C. on university business must notify the university president in advance. When submitting a travel request, the traveler must complete the electronic [SFA Report of Travel to Washington, D.C.](#) form. Once submitted online, it will automatically be sent to the president. Alternatively, the traveler could include the request to travel to DC expense line in their travel request to have the request sent to and approved by the president. Additionally, per state law, if the travel is funded by state appropriations and its purpose is to engage in activities related to obtaining or spending federal funds, or to impact federal policies, the university must inform the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations (OSFR) by completing the [OSFR Report of State Agency Travel to Washington, D.C.](#) form. The provost's office will determine whether the OSFR should be informed of the travel. If so, the provost's office will complete and submit the OSFR form and maintain a copy.

International Travel

See [SFA International Travel Rules and Guidelines](#).

Individual Traveler Charge Card (charges billed to the individual)

An individual traveler charge card is available for eligible employees through a State of Texas contract. To be eligible to apply, the employee must expect to take three (3) or more business trips per fiscal year or expend at least \$500 per fiscal year for official state business travel. An employee is not required to apply for or accept a state-issued traveler charge card. Applying for the card may affect the applicant's credit score.

The state-issued traveler charge card is to be used for business-related charges only while traveling on official state business. Use of the card for personal business or travel is considered a violation of state policy and these Travel Guidelines, and the employee may be subject to disciplinary action. The individual whose name appears on the card is billed directly by the card issuer and is solely responsible for payment of the account.

The employee, the employee's supervisor, and the travel office must approve the application. If the application is approved by the credit card company, the employee agrees to be bound by the card member agreement and by the state policies governing the use of the card. Applications and further information concerning this program are available on the [travel office website](#). The individual traveler charge card must be returned to the travel office for cancellation upon termination of employment or transfer to a non-traveling position.

Travel Card – T-Card (Company Billed Card-charges billed to the university)

The state-issued Travel Card (T-Card) is to be used for certain travel charges related to official state business (see next paragraph). Use of the card for personal business or personal travel is considered a violation of state policy, Travel Guidelines, and the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

The T-Card should be used only for certain travel-related expenses. This includes registration fees, airfare, lodging expenses, and rental car charges. Other type charges may be allowed if approved by the travel office. Employees using the T-Card agree to be bound by the state and university policies governing the use of the card. The T-Card is assigned to an SFA employee to be used for the cardholder's travel expenses. Each traveler needs to use their own travel card for their own travel-related expenses. T-Card charges are uploaded to the Concur software to the specific cardholder (Traveler). These charges must be reconciled to the traveler's expense report only.

Tax Exemptions

SFA is exempt from paying the state portion of hotel occupancy tax for lodging in Texas. It is the traveler's responsibility to provide a [Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate](#) to the lodging establishment and to ensure that the state portion of hotel occupancy tax is not charged by the vendor. If the state portion of the hotel occupancy tax is paid by a T-Card, the traveler must reimburse SFA or obtain a T-Card credit from the vendor.

Other states offer state hotel occupancy tax exemptions for Texas State employees. The traveler should review the [Tax Exemption section](#) of Travel Resources to see if the destination offers a tax exemption.

Instead, state employees must submit a completed [Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate](#) (accessible from the [travel office website](#)) to commercial lodging establishments at check-in. Many other states also provide sales/hotel tax exemptions. Travelers should check the [SFA Tax Exempt Status webpage](#) to determine whether they are exempt from taxes in the applicable state, and for required documentation. Employees should be prepared to show proof of state employment. The original itemized lodging receipt, attached to the travel expense report, is required.

Advance Travel Funds

Advance travel funds are only available for student group travel. However, the T-Card can be used for charges that are normally incurred in advance of the trip, such as airfare and registration fees.

Travel Expense Report

In order to receive reimbursement, travel expenditures must be documented on the travel expense report available in the Concur software. The travel expense report must reflect the total expenses paid for the trip, whether paid by the traveler or the university. Expenses paid by the traveler should be coded as reimbursable. Expenses paid by the university should be coded as non-reimbursable. T-Card expenditures should be detailed separately in order to match expenses paid with the T-Card to the travel expense report.

Original receipts are required for most travel expenses, except meals. Meal receipts are required for:

- group travel (see the Student and Other Group Travel section, below)
- business meals (see the Business Meals While on Travel Status section, below)
- foreign meals (where reimbursement of actual, reasonable costs is requested.)

The travel expense report, with the documentation scanned and attached, should be submitted to the travel office within 15 days from the ending date of the trip, except at fiscal year-end when an earlier deadline may be established by the travel office. All documentation will be submitted electronically, in a format prescribed by the travel office. All prior year encumbrances will be cancelled at the end of the year.

Conference, workshop, or meeting agendas must be attached to the travel expense report. Registration fees often include the cost of certain meals provided during the event. A traveler cannot claim per diem for the meals that are included in the cost of the conference or any meals provided by a third party.

Expenses will be reimbursed after the trip is completed.

Foreign Currency Conversion

All amounts listed on the travel expense report must be converted to U.S. Dollars (USD) using the rate applicable on the date of the expenditure. The Concur travel module offers a conversion tool within the travel report. Simply change the currency on the expense line to have the software do the conversion. Receipts are required for all reimbursed expenses.

Reimbursement Rates - Lodging

Travelers may be reimbursed for the actual cost of lodging, only at a commercial lodging establishment, not to exceed the rates published by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Generally, the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts adopts the [Federal Per Diem Rates](#) for specific cities/counties. SFA's Concur site reflects the current reimbursement rates for domestic and international locations. These reimbursement rates are automatically calculated when the travel

request is entered into Concur. Travelers to a foreign country may be reimbursed for actual, reasonable lodging costs with an itemized receipt or based on the Concur-calculated reimbursement rate.

Hotel taxes are not included in maximum lodging reimbursement rates. Local taxes on the allowable lodging cost will be reimbursed and should be recorded as lodging tax on the travel expense report.

NOTE: Texas state tax on in-state lodging will not be reimbursed to employees. Please reference Tax Exemption section of the guidelines.

Travel Tip: The state government rate for lodging is often less than the conference rate. Employees should compare the state government rate to the conference rate before finalizing reservations. Since there may be a limited number of rooms available at the state government rate, employees should make lodging reservations as far in advance of the travel dates as practical, considering all relevant circumstances.

Lodging Exceeds

When the actual lodging amount exceeds the allowable per diem, the excess may be charged to any approved department account (FOP) upon account/financial manager approval. This excess amount, including associated taxes, is entered on the travel expense report as “Lodging Exceeds” expense type. The [Lodging Exceeds Calculator](#), available on the [travel office website](#), may be used to calculate the amount to enter. The lodging exceeds calculation must be attached to the travel expense report.

Shared Lodging

Shared lodging between SFA employees is reimbursable if added to individual expense reports of each employee. Individual receipts showing the traveler’s pro-rated share of the split costs will be required for each request for reimbursement.

Reimbursement Rates - Meals

This section does not apply to road bus drivers. Normally, road bus drivers are not reimbursed for meals. Meal reimbursement for road bus drivers is subject to the discretion and approval of the director of the physical plant.

Meals are eligible for reimbursement only if travel includes an overnight stay. The daily per diem reimbursement rate for meals and incidental expenses (MIE) is established by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, GSA per diem and is subject to change.

The meal and incidental expenses (MIE) reimbursement for domestic travel is limited to the [Federal](#)

Per Diem rates for specific locations. The first and last day of travel will be calculated at 75 percent. Incidental expenses are added according to GSA rates include tips and transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken.

Travelers to a foreign country may be reimbursed for actual, reasonable costs of meals, in which case receipts are required in Concur. If a traveler wants to use per diem rates for meals, they can use the calculated conversion within Concur

Meals are reimbursable for partial days of travel (with an overnight stay) as stated below. If a traveler is traveling outside of the time frame listed below they must mark the meal as provided to opt out of the per diem. The traveler must be away from his/her designated worksite on official business the entire time period to be eligible for per diem for that meal:

Breakfast	6:00 am - 8:00 am
Lunch	11:30 am - 1:30 pm
Dinner	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Some registration fees include meals. In this case, the registration fee is fully reimbursable but the traveler must not claim per diem for the included meal. Conference, workshop, or meeting agendas must be attached to the travel expense report.

Meals purchased for the traveler by another person or entity are not reimbursable and per diem may not be claimed for these meals.

Employees traveling together must pay and claim their own expenses.

When claiming per diem on the travel expense report, no meal receipts are required except for group travel (see the Student and Group Travel section, below) and business meals.

Business Meals While on Travel Status

A business meal is defined as a meal that includes more than one person, includes at least one university employee, and has a substantive business purpose essential to the university's mission. Business meals are allowed while on travel status but require the same documentation as stated in the [Guidelines for Expenditures from University Funds](#).

The T-Card or the employee's own credit card may be used for these meals. If a business meal is purchased while on travel status, the employee must not claim per diem for that meal. Employees may be reimbursed for business meals by including these expenses on their travel expense report if they personally paid for the business meal. The reimbursement amounts are subject to the limits set for business meals in the [Guidelines for Expenditures from University Funds](#).

Travel To/From the Duty Point; Travel Before/After Conducting Official Business

Subject to the other provisions of these Travel Guidelines, meals and lodging expenses may be reimbursed for travel expenses to/from the duty point and prior to/after conducting official business. This is only as necessary, and generally limited to no more than one day before/after the business event, unless it is financially beneficial to the university (e.g., when discounted airfare requires a longer stay and the additional expenses incurred (hotel, meals and/or transportation costs) would not exceed the airfare savings. In these instances, the total net savings must be documented and attached to the travel expense report.

Reimbursement Rates - Mileage

The maximum reimbursement rate for use of a traveler's personal vehicle is established by state regulation, and is subject to change. The current mileage reimbursement rate for personal vehicle usage is available on the [travel office website](#).

The number of reimbursable miles (see *NOTE, below) traveled using a personal vehicle may not exceed the number of miles of the shortest route, regardless of the route actually driven. Travelers can use the Concur mileage calculator to calculate and document the miles traveled. They can also attach Google Maps, MapQuest, or other maps to show the miles traveled. Alternatively, mileage can be calculated with an odometer log. Mileage determined by use of the traveler's odometer must be itemized on a point-to-point basis on the travel expense report. The Point-to-Point Odometer Log, available on the [travel office website](#), can serve this purpose. Any business-related vicinity mileage at the destination location must also be itemized separately on a point-to-point basis. For purposes of this paragraph, "point" means a building, house, highway intersection, or other similarly localized spot.

*NOTE: It may be most cost-effective to rent a vehicle rather than drive a personal vehicle or fly. The [vehicle cost comparison calculator](#) compares the auto rental cost vs. the personal

vehicle reimbursement cost. Travelers are encouraged to utilize the calculator in determining which mode of travel is best. State law mandates that each travel arrangement be the most cost-effective considering all relevant circumstances.

The university has contracted with Enterprise to provide cost savings to the university. The contract provisions include no additional charge for picking up a rental in Nacogdoches on Saturday (or after 4 pm on Friday) for travel beginning on Sunday, and no drop fee for one-way rentals in Texas. Therefore, it may be more cost-effective to drive a rental vehicle to the airport and drop it off there than to use a personal vehicle and pay airport parking fees. A link to the university's contracted rates with Enterprise is available on the [travel office website](#).

Motor Vehicle Rentals

If approved on the travel request, some expenses of renting a motor vehicle are reimbursable. The daily rate, applicable taxes, and other mandatory charges are reimbursable. The Texas motor vehicle rental tax for in-state rentals is not reimbursable. In order to take advantage of the tax exempt status of the university, the employee must provide a [Motor Vehicle Rental Tax Exemption Certificate](#) when renting a vehicle in Texas. Alternatively, the employee can elect to have Enterprise direct bill the university and the tax will not be charged. An additional driver charge is reimbursable if it is incurred for an official state business reason. Based on the current contracts with Enterprise, there is no additional charge for an additional driver. Collision damage waiver and loss damage waiver expenses are reimbursable only if they are not already included in the contracted rate (see next paragraph).

The university has partnered with the University of Texas System Office for even lower rates than the state contracted rates. A listing of the contracted agencies and links to the rates are available on the [travel office website](#). University employees traveling on official state business are encouraged to use these contracted rates when possible.

The following expenses are not reimbursable: liability insurance supplement, personal accident insurance, safe trip insurance, personal effects insurance, and prepaid fuel at a gas station without an itemized receipt of the number of gallons and the rate per gallon.

Fuel purchased from the rental car company is reimbursable only if paid with departmental discretionary funds; otherwise, the traveler is personally responsible for paying the fuel costs directly to the rental car company.

The detailed receipt from the motor vehicle rental company, attached to the travel expense report, is required for reimbursement of motor vehicle rental expenses.

Four-Per-Car-Rule

Coordination of travel must occur when employees travel on the same dates with the same itinerary

to conduct the same official state business. When four or fewer employees travel on the same itinerary, only one may be reimbursed for mileage or rental vehicle. When more than four employees travel on the same itinerary, only one out of every four may be reimbursed for mileage or rental vehicle.

Reimbursement Rates – Representative of the President

If the president is unable to attend a meeting or conference, he/she may designate, on an individual trip basis, one employee to travel as a representative. Under this provision, the employee is reimbursed for actual expenses. The travel expense report must be accompanied by the original designating document from the president. Receipts are required as specified in these Travel Guidelines, and the employee may only claim his/her own expenses.

Registration Fees

The registration fee for attendance at a professional meeting or conference must be reflected on the travel request regardless of payment method. After the travel request has been approved, the registration fee may be paid as follows (in order of preference):

- with a travel card (T-Card)
- by the traveler
- with a procurement card (P-Card)
- by purchase voucher – When requested in sufficient time, the university will prepay the registration fee to the conference vendor. An approved purchase voucher must be submitted to the travel office with the completed registration form and travel request number. Registration fees will not be paid more than six (6) weeks in advance of the seminar or conference unless the cost savings is considerable to the university (such as early-bird discounts) or if there is a limited capacity for attendance.

Registration fees for in-town conferences, virtual conferences, or webinars do not require a travel request. These can be paid by P-Card, a purchase voucher to the vendor, or if paid by the employee, reimbursed through the purchase requisition process.

Airline Ticket Purchases

Any airline ticket expense, regardless of payment method, must be listed on the approved travel request. After approval of the travel request, travelers may make the airfare purchase personally. Travelers are encouraged to make flight reservations at discounted fares but are advised to not book Basic Economy. Often this requires that the ticket be purchased well in advance of the travel date.

If it is necessary to change an airline ticket, the traveler may be reimbursed for the additional fee only if there is a valid business reason for the change. The reason must be documented in writing, and approved by the account manager. Except in unusual circumstances and with advanced approval, a

traveler will not be reimbursed for a second ticket to or from the same destination.

The university cannot reimburse a traveler for the cost of air transportation by a non-commercial transportation company.

Important note about air travel funded by U.S. government grants: The Fly America Act (49 U.S.C. §§40118 et seq.) requires travelers using federal funds to travel “to use United States air carrier service for all air travel and cargo transportation services funded by the United States Government. One exception to this requirement is transportation provided under a bilateral or multilateral air transport agreement (“Open Skies Agreement”), to which the United States Government and the government of a foreign country are parties, and which the Department of Transportation has determined meets the requirements of the Fly America Act.” Travelers whose airfare will be paid or reimbursed by grants funded by the U.S. Government should contact the SFA Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for complete information prior to obligating funds for air travel.

Use of Non-University Owned Vehicle While on Official Business

A traveler operating a personal vehicle must carry insurance as required by state law. A traveler operating any non-university owned vehicle, including his/her own personal vehicle or a personally rented vehicle, does so at his/her own risk. The university accepts no responsibility for vehicle or other damage, personal injury, claims filing, vehicle repair, maintenance, insurance costs, towing, or citations.

Ancillary Expenses

Expenses for ground transportation to and from the airport such as taxi, limousine, subway, bus and other modes of transit are reimbursable, subject to the provisions of this section. (Travel to and from restaurants at the destination are not reimbursed since the daily meal and incidental expenses (MIE) rate includes these expenses.) All expenses must be listed on the approved travel request and travel expense report. Limousine expenses are reimbursable if it was the most cost-effective mode of transportation available considering all relevant circumstances. If two or more state employees share a taxi or limousine, it is allowable for one employee to pay and be reimbursed for that full expense. Other official business expenses (e.g., parking, telephone calls, and copy services) are also reimbursable. Valet parking is not reimbursable unless there is a valid written explanation as to why self-parking is not feasible, advisable, or available.

Receipts are requested, but not required, for reimbursable incidental expenses. If receipts are not provided, an explanation of the reimbursable expenses must be detailed on the travel expense report (including type of expense, date, amount, and location).

The following are not reimbursable: expenses of a personal nature, expenses that would be incurred by the traveler regardless of official state business travel, and tips and gratuities. (See the Student

and Other Group Travel section, below, for exception to this tips and gratuities rule.)

Student and Other Group Travel

With the exception of the president and vice presidents, employees traveling together are not considered group travel. Each employee must pay and claim his/her own expenses.

When a non-employee group, such as a student group, travels together, it may be more convenient for one person to pay and claim expenses of the entire group. In this case, the person paying the expenses (normally the group sponsor or advisor) will be responsible for submitting the travel request and the travel expense report with itemized receipts for all expenses of group travel, including meals. Alternatively, students or other non-employee group members may be given funds for their meals. In this case, the person distributing the funds will provide a list of all group members and their campus identification (ID) numbers, if applicable, and each group member will sign adjacent to their name acknowledging receipt of the funds. The signed list will serve as the receipt to be submitted with the travel expense report. The amount of funds distributed to group members shall not to exceed university per diem rates.

Tips or gratuities paid in conjunction with meal expenses are generally not reimbursable. A “mandatory” service charge may only be reimbursed if the service charge is imposed by an establishment and cannot be refused by the customer. In this case, the person paying the expenses must obtain and submit documentation that the charge was mandatory.

If the group leader is an employee, he/she may request advance travel funds to pay expenses for the group. This group leader will be solely responsible for claiming reimbursement on the travel expense report and for repayment of the advance travel funds.

Non-Reimbursed Travel (Zero Travel)

A travel request is required for any out-of-town university-related travel even if travel expenses are not reimbursed. Examples include:

- travel for which university funds are not approved
- travel for which the traveler does not request or expect reimbursement
- travel that has been or will be paid by another source

Exception to Travel Guidelines for Medical Reasons

Exceptions to these Travel Guidelines for medical reasons must be approved in advance of the trip. The traveler should contact the Human Resources Director regarding the process to request accommodations. This request must be submitted far enough in advance of the travel for a disability committee to either approve or deny it. The committee’s written approval decision must be attached to the travel expense report.