

TRAVEL POLICY

Purpose

This Travel Policy is effective for travel that occurs on or after November 1, 2018. The County will pay expenses, of its officers and employees, incurred while on work assignments away from the employee's normal work location. Such travel must be approved by the employee's Supervisor and/or Department Head/Elected Official. Department Heads/Elected Officials should review the travel plans of their employees in advance and, where practicable, approve or disapprove all ascertainable expenses in advance of those expenses being incurred. Employees approved for business travel must make their own travel arrangements. For out of state travel, authorizations by the Department Head/Elected Official must be in writing.

The general goal of this policy is that employees should seek the lowest reasonable travel expense and avoid impropriety or the appearance of impropriety, including the public perception that a business trip has been taken for personal reasons. In cases where vacation time is added to business travel, any cost variance must be clearly identified and paid by the employee. In addition, family members or guests accompanying business travel may not incur expenses on behalf of the County. Personal expenses are the responsibility of the employee. Public funds may never be used for personal gain.

Allowable Expenses

- Registration fees - The County will cover the costs of registration.
- Airfare – Employees are expected to obtain the lowest available airfare that reasonably meets business travel needs.
 - Only coach or economy tickets will be paid or reimbursed. If higher priced tickets are purchased, the employee will pay for the difference with his or her personal funds.
 - Baggage fees, either included with or separate from airfare, will be covered at the rate of one carry-on, if charged, and one checked bag within airline weight limits. Any additional costs will be paid by employee.
- Ground transportation – The mode of transportation chosen for travel shall be the most cost effective, or economical, that is reasonable under the circumstances. When practical, a County vehicle or common carrier should be used.
 - County vehicle – When using a County vehicle, it must be returned with a full tank of gas.
 - Public transportation – The employee should utilize the hotel shuttle service or other shuttle services, if available. If none are offered, the use of the most economic transportation is encouraged. Forms of public transportation include, but are not limited to, bus, taxi, car-for-hire service, subway, or train.
 - Personal vehicle – Mileage will be paid for those necessary miles driven from the place of work or home to the destination, whichever is lesser, at the prevailing rate per mile approved for the State of Indiana. On-line mapping tools may be used to verify distances for the purposes of mileage reimbursement.
 - Rental vehicle – A rental vehicle may be utilized if the use of shuttle or public transportation is not practical. The County will not cover any additional costs for insurance through the rental agency as the County carries its own insurance. The employee must refuel the vehicle before returning it to the rental company. Compact or

- mid-size cars are required for two or fewer employees traveling together and a full-size vehicle may be used for three or more employees.
- Incidental transportation charges, such as parking and tolls, are allowable expenses.
 - Lodging – Overnight accommodation is allowable if the destination is more than fifty (50) miles from the Tippecanoe County Courthouse.
 - The County will cover the cost for a standard single-room at lodgings with the most competitive rates, including those with government and/or conference discounts. Shared lodging is recommended but not required and will be covered at a standard double-room rate.
 - Lodging coverage shall be limited to the number of nights required to conduct the assigned County business. For example, if a conference opens on a Monday afternoon and closes Friday noon, allowable accommodations would be Monday night through Thursday night.
 - The only charges covered under Lodging are for the room itself and associated allowable taxes. Other charges such as telephone, internet fees, and room service, are covered under M&IE (see below).
 - In the event of a change in plans or cancellation, the employee must cancel the lodging reservation so as not to incur cancellation charges.
 - The County reserves the right to disallow room charges in excess of reasonable rates.
 - Meals & Incidental Expenses (M&IE) – M&IE applies to overnight travel. M&IE primarily refers to meals, but may include certain incidental expenses not already specified, such as certain hotel services.
 - Meal expenses are deemed necessary and reasonable when meals are not otherwise provided and/or included in registration fees for travel purpose. If not already applied by the establishment, gratuity must be calculated at no more than 20% of the bill before sales tax. *The County will not pay for alcoholic beverages under any circumstances.*
 - The allowance for M&IE will be calculated at the rate of up to \$20 per day (with proper receipts) for a “travel day” and up to \$30 per day (with proper receipts) for a “non-travel day”. A “travel day” is one in which the employee spends part of the day traveling to or from the business destination, whether travel initiates from the place of work or the employees home. A “non-travel day” is one in which the entire day is spent at the business destination. In the case of ambiguity as to whether a day is considered travel or non-travel, the travel allowance will be calculated at the travel day rate. The employee may not unreasonably extend the trip by leaving early or returning late to increase the amount of travel allowance.
 - For pre-authorized out of state travel, the employee may request an increase in the travel allowance if the destination to which the employee is traveling has higher than normal cost of living. The allowance may be increased in proportion to the amount of increase the federal General Services Administration allows for “Meals and Incidental Expenses” (M&IE) at the destination as compared to its M&IE Standard rate. (Example: The GSA M&IE Standard rate is \$51 while the M&IE rate for Denver is \$69. The ratio is 1.35. A travel day to Denver would be allowed up to \$27.00 and a non-travel day would be allowed up to \$40.50. *Source: <https://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877>).*

- Any amount of allowance not substantiated with proper receipts shall not be payable to the employee. Rates for M&IE are an allowance and not a guarantee of funds.
- Exceptions to the M&IE allowance, due to dietary restrictions or needs, may be considered on a case by case basis.

Payment of Expenses

- All claims submitted for payment must be substantiated with proper receipts and Department Head/Elected Official approval.
- Claims will be made on the prescribed forms and/or within the County's software systems.
- Payments will be made with sufficient budget/appropriation.
- Payments should be made void of sales tax as much as feasible.
- Methods of payment:
 - Direct AP Claim by the County
 - Claims are processed according to scheduled deadlines set by the Auditor's office and approved by the Board of Commissioners at their regularly scheduled meetings.
 - Card Program (i.e. County-issued credit card or P-Card)
 - Employees may request and utilize a County Travel Card to pay for allowable expenses during authorized business travel. Travel expenses charged to any County card must comply with the policies set forth by the County's Card Program. (*See Tippecanoe County Government Card Program Manual.*)
 - Employee Reimbursement
 - When the County or other third party has not otherwise directly paid for an authorized travel expense, the employee may submit a claim for reimbursement of allowable expenses with proper receipts.
 - Unless specified by the terms of grant requirements or other contract, reimbursement of travel expenses will be made to the employee only.
 - Claims for reimbursement must be submitted within 30 days following the end of business travel.

Exceptions

In the event of a conflict with federal or state law or the terms of a federal, state, or other grant, the provisions of those authorities shall supersede this policy.

This policy may be used as a guideline in the absence of any other travel-specific contract terms for contractors, contract employees, or other agents conducting official business of the County.

The Board of Commissioners may authorize exceptions to this policy. Such authorization must be in writing and state the reasons for the exception. Reasons for exceptions include but are not limited to: emergency or loss or harm to the County or to others.