

General Travel Policies

POLICY

State laws, policies and procedures; WSU policies; and policies of individual administrative units and sponsors regulate all WSU travel.

State Law

Refer to *RCW* 43.03 for state of Washington travel statutes.

State Regulations

Refer to the *State Administrative and Accounting Manual (SAAM)* Chapter 10 for state of Washington policies and procedures.
NOTE: Washington State University is exempt from provisions in *SAAM* 10.10.45, 10.30.60, 10.50.35, 10.50.40, 10.50.45, 10.50.50, 10.50.75, and 10.80.55.

WSU Policy / Procedure

Chapter 95 of the *Business Policies and Procedures Manual (BPPM)* includes WSU travel policies and procedures with references to the state laws and regulations. See also:

- *Safety Policies and Procedures Manual (SPPM)* 5.40 for transport of hazardous materials.
- *SPPM* Chapter 7 for motor vehicle safety.

Temporary Emergencies

On occasion, the state government and the central administration may require additional travel restrictions and controls due to temporary funding limitations. At such times the central administration distributes memoranda describing temporary policies.

Applicability

The following persons must comply with University and state of Washington policies and procedures:

- All University officers, employees, and volunteers, unless otherwise provided by law.
- Persons other than University officers and employees where travel expenses are authorized by statute, but the statute is silent as to amount.
- Contractors, unless there are specific contractual arrangements modifying travel reimbursement.

These rules may be used as a guideline for the payment of legally authorized travel expenses for students and other clients of the University. (*SAAM* 10.10.05)

Conflicting Rates

When a sponsoring agreement specifies policies or rates which are less restrictive than WSU policies or rates, apply the WSU policy or rate.

When a sponsoring agreement specifies policies or rates which are more restrictive than WSU policies or rates, apply the policy or rate of the sponsoring agreement.

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Unit Policy

WSU unit administrators may establish more restrictive travel policies or procedures. Generally, unit directives apply to approval procedures, reimbursement amounts, and reimbursement requirements.

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

The University maintains a positive control over travel. A traveler must have prior approval to be eligible to travel and to be reimbursed for travel expenses.

The following requirements apply to approval of all official University travel.

Authority to Approve All Travel

University officials holding the following titles are authorized to approve all travel for subordinates:

- Provost
- Vice President
- Vice Provost
- Associate and Assistant Vice President
- Dean and Associate Dean
- Director of Libraries
- Director of Athletics

University officials holding the above titles may delegate approval authority to subordinates holding the title of chair or director.

Split Authority

When one administrator supervises the employee and another administrator is responsible for the supporting account, both administrators approve the travel.

Exceptions

The Executive Director of Business Services/Controller approves exceptions to WSU travel policies or procedures.

Submit a written request to Travel Services through administrative channels, describing the circumstances that justify an exception. The Executive Director of Business Services/Controller has the authority to waive certain regulations and the Director of the Office of Financial Management has the authority to waive state regulations that are not included in the state law.

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APPROVING TRAVEL

Administrators identify appropriate travel.

- For an employee, appropriate travel is official University business away from the employee's official station.
- Appropriate travel results in some benefit to WSU.

Administrators are to exercise prudent judgment when approving travel-related costs. (SAAM 10.10.10)

Administrators are to ensure that any travel costs incurred are:

- Directly work related.
- Obtained at the most economical price.
- Both critical and necessary for state business. (SAAM 10.10.10)

Administrators are to ensure that travelers are not treated differently under like travel circumstances. (SAAM 10.10.10)

Criteria

An approving administrator must use the following criteria when authorizing a person to travel on official state business and determining travel alternatives.

Economical

Administrators and travelers are to select the travel alternative that is most economical to the state. Agencies must use this criteria except in the situations noted below under [Advantageous](#).

All costs, e.g., travel, labor, should be considered when making the determination. For example: Is it less expensive to drive than fly out of Spokane Airport? Is it cheaper to fly out of Spokane than out of Pullman?

Advantageous

Administrators and travelers are to select the travel alternative that is most advantageous to the state. An agency may use this advantageous criterion only in the following situations:

- To ensure the health and safety of agency travelers (see [Ensure Health and Safety](#)).
- To comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (see [Compliance with ADA Act](#)).
- To process approval for meals with meetings (see *BPPM 70.31*);
- To authorize the use of privately owned motor vehicles (see *BPPM 95.11*).

The personal travel plans of the traveler are not to influence this criterion.

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Alternatives to Travel

Before approving travel, an administrator is to evaluate travel alternatives which may achieve the same result for less money, i.e., teleconferencing, video conferencing, mailing video recordings or published reports, reducing the frequency of scheduled out-of-town meetings, car pooling, or use of public transit.
(SAAM 10.10.25)

Limit Numbers

The number of sponsored travelers attending a meeting should be the minimum necessary, consistent with the benefit to WSU.

Excessive Expenses

The University does not reimburse excessive or unnecessary expenses.

Compliance with ADA Act

In order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, administrators are to provide all employees an equal opportunity to travel on official business. Administrators may approve travel costs for disabled travelers even if those costs exceed what would normally be most economical to the University. Examples include: costs to transport a wheelchair and to accommodate wheelchair access or costs to obtain auxiliary aids for a hearing- or vision-impaired traveler. When additional expenses are necessary, indicate on the Travel Authority and/or Travel Expense Voucher that the expenditures are required in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Ensure Health and Safety

The health and safety of travelers is a top priority in the conduct of travel related activities. It is advantageous to the state for departments to establish and alter travel plans and itineraries with consideration of hazardous inclement weather and other situations that could threaten the health and safety of state personnel.

Weather Not Involved

Pre-approval by the traveler's supervisor is generally required when an alteration of travel plans, for health and safety reasons other than severe inclement weather, will result in extra travel expenses. In emergency situations, such as sudden onset of incapacitating illness, the supervisor should be contacted as soon as possible. An explanation of the health or safety issue must also be noted on the traveler's Travel Expense Voucher (see *BPPM* 95.18).

Weather Is Involved

Prompt notification of the traveler's supervisor is required when an alteration of travel plans and itineraries due to severe inclement weather may result in extra travel expenses. The severe inclement weather condition must also be noted on the traveler's Travel Expense Voucher.

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TRAVELER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

A traveler on official state business is responsible for the following. (SAAM 10.10.15)

Regulations

Being familiar with state and University travel and transportation regulations before embarking on travel.

Prudent Judgment

Exercising the same care in incurring expenses and accomplishing the purposes of the travel that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official state business travel are not acceptable.

Personal Preference

Paying any excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience.

Prior Authorization

Securing prior authorization for travel (see *BPPM 95.05*).

Submit TEV

Preparing the Travel Expense Voucher and attaching appropriate receipts and documentation as required by *BPPM 95.20*.

Prompt Return

Returning as promptly as possible to either the official station or official residence when the state business is completed.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the "prompt return" requirement may include one or more of the following circumstances:

- When the approving administrator determines that it is economical for the traveler to remain longer in travel status. The approving administrator provides a justification for the exception on the Travel Authority or Travel Expense Voucher.
- When concern for the health and safety of a traveler prevents a prompt return. (See also *BPPM 95.18* for more about illness or injury while on travel status.) The approving administrator provides a justification for the exception with the Travel Expense Voucher.
- When the employee, with prior approval, takes appropriate leave and conducts personal travel at no additional cost to the University. See *BPPM 95.17* for more information regarding travel for personal convenience.

LOCATION DEFINITIONS

Official Station

The official station is the location where the employee's work is performed on a permanent basis. (The official station is determined by the needs of the University.)

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BUSINESS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

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Official Residence

The official residence of an employee is the location of his or her regularly-occupied domicile.

Regular Work Place

The regular work place is the building where the employee normally performs his or her duties or work. The regular work place does not include meeting or conference rooms.

Questions

Questions regarding implementation of these definitions are resolved by the Executive Director of Business Services/ Controller.

INSURANCE

The University's industrial insurance and workers' compensation cover all employees who travel on official University business.

WSU does not provide insurance for students, applicants or other nonemployee travelers.