

FRANKLIN COUNTY TRAVEL POLICY

A. AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL

1. Each County agency, court, board, and/or commission should ensure that all requests for travel are necessary and essential before authorizing travel on County business. Managers should make every effort to limit both in-county and out-of-county travel when other alternatives are available (e.g. conference calls, video conferencing, webinars, carpooling, use of county-owned vehicles, etc.). **The employee's management is responsible for ensuring that the expenses listed are appropriate for the travel and meet the travel policy requirements contained herein.**
2. Requests for travel requiring an overnight stay, approved by the employee's management, should be submitted on a "Request for Authorization to Travel on County Business" form (copy attached). Every effort should be made to take advantage of early or advance registration discounts. The conference brochure or a similar document must accompany the travel authorization form, as well as any request for payment associated with the trip.
3. The Board of Commissioners shall routinely approve all travel requiring an overnight stay, where expenses are anticipated to be incurred by Franklin County officials or employees. **All such travel expenses shall be encumbered in accordance with the County's purchase order policy, and except for emergency travel the purchase order must be approved prior to the date of travel.** The purchase order must include all of the costs associated with the travel, including any conference registration fees.
4. In the event a purchase order cannot be approved prior to the overnight travel event, emergency travel may be temporarily authorized by a Commissioner or the highest level administrative person available at the time the travel is deemed necessary. This authorization is evidenced by the signature of a Commissioner, County Administrator, Deputy County Administrator, or OMB Director on the travel authorization form and must be obtained prior to the date of travel. The Board of Commissioners must approve subsequent reimbursement for these expenses.
5. As used in this policy, references to reimbursement and payment in advance includes use of a procurement card for the payment of the applicable expenses. Please refer to the Procurement Card Program Policy and Procedures for additional detail and requirements.

B. PROHIBITIONS

1. No employee or official of Franklin County shall solicit or receive travel expenses, or accept payment of registration fees and/or lodging for their attendance at a conference, from a party that is interested in matters before, regulated by, or doing or seeking to do business with the particular department or agency involved.
2. Employees or officials of Franklin County are prohibited from accumulating, for personal use, "frequent flyer" miles earned on official travel that is paid for or reimbursed by the government. Any employees or officials of Franklin County must use such miles earned for future official travel for that employee or another employee of Franklin County, or forfeit such miles. This ruling is mandated per Ohio Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion No. 91-010 and cited in the Auditor of State's Ohio Compliance Supplement Manual.
3. Under no circumstance will entertainment or alcoholic beverages be reimbursed. If a charge for alcoholic beverages is included in the event's registration or conference fee, that cost must be deducted from the fee.

C. TRAVEL WITHOUT AN OVERNIGHT STAY

1. Expenses that are eligible for reimbursement without an overnight stay are registration or conference fees, mileage, fuel for a County-owned vehicle, parking, and tolls.
2. While a "Request for Authorization to Travel on County Business" form is not required to be completed for travel reimbursements that do not involve an overnight stay, it is recommended that County offices use the form or other appropriate documentation to monitor and approve these types of travel reimbursements.
3. Registration or conference fees may be paid directly by the County in advance of the event. The payment of the fee may be made through a purchase order, or by direct voucher if the payment qualifies under the guidelines set forth in the Franklin County Purchasing Policy.
4. A separate blanket purchase order may be opened for the purpose of paying for registration fees associated with travel without an overnight stay. However, in no event may such a blanket purchase order be used for the payment of a registration fee that does involve an overnight stay.
5. Some seminars and conferences include the price of a meal as part of the program. In those cases, meal purchases as part of the registration are allowable. When the meal is being provided by the conference but the employee chooses to eat elsewhere, reimbursement will not be made for the other meal.
6. Employees are encouraged to contact Fleet Management at 614-525-3412 for the use of a pool vehicle. When use of a pool vehicle is not practicable, travel by privately-owned vehicle is permissible if the owner is insured under a policy of liability insurance, and the driver has a valid driver's license.
7. Reimbursement for mileage, parking, fuel for a County-owned vehicle, and tolls is made through the employing agency's payroll department, does not require a purchase order and does not need to be submitted to the Auditor's Office. Effective January 1, 2024, mileage is reimbursable at the standard mileage rate established by the IRS for business expenses. Reimbursement shall be made to only one of two or more County employees traveling in the same privately-owned automobile. The names of all persons traveling in the same privately-owned automobile should be listed on the Employee Reimbursement Request form.

8. Travel during on-duty hours must utilize the most direct route unless an alternate route would be less time consuming and/or more effective. During on-duty hours, employees shall not deviate from the route of travel or stop along the route of travel to conduct personal business or engage in any activity that is not within their assigned or required duties.
9. For travel outside of the County, the total reimbursable mileage for the trip is equal to the lesser of:
 - a) The distance from the individual's workplace to the destination, and back to the individual's workplace.
 - b) The distance from the individual's place of residence to the destination, and back to the individual's place of residence.
10. When it is necessary for an employee to travel from his/her normal work location to any other location for purposes of conducting assigned or required duties, the mileage reimbursement rate shall apply for the actual miles driven. Employees must maintain a record of daily travel documenting the locations and the distance between, for which reimbursement is being sought.
11. When assigned or required duties make it necessary for an employee to travel from his/her home to any other location which is not his/her normal work location, or

When assigned or required duties make it necessary for an employee to travel from his/her normal work location to any other location prior to proceeding home, then

The employees will be reimbursed only for the mileage in excess of that which would have been incurred by the employee's normal commute. Under no circumstances will an employee be reimbursed for mileage attributable to the employee's normal commute, regardless of the day's business travel requirements.

D. OVERNIGHT TRAVEL – TRAVEL STATUS

1. Authorized travel status generally begins when the employee departs to the event from the employee's normal work location, or start of the workday if departing from the employee's place of residence. However, employees arriving up to two hours prior to a plane's departure are considered to be on authorized travel status.
2. Authorized travel status generally ends upon the earliest of a) the return of the employee to Franklin County, or b) the return of the employee to the county of the employee's place of residence.
3. In some instances, a lower fare for travel by airplane may be obtained with extended or weekend travel, but which will result in additional lodging, meal, or other travel costs. An employee may request approval of such extended or weekend travel arrangements where it can be demonstrated that the fare savings exceed the additional travel costs incurred for lodging and meals. Such travel time is on the employee's own time, and may not be credited towards overtime or compensatory/administrative time calculations. If additional travel time is needed due to the above extended personal layover, then this time must be charged to the employee's accrued leave balances (excluding sick leave) when the travel time occurs during the work day.
4. If the first scheduled event of a conference or seminar is scheduled to begin at or before 11:00 A.M. (Eastern Time), an employee may depart the day prior to the event. If the first scheduled event begins after 11:00 A.M. (Eastern Time), an employee is expected to depart that same day unless the employee can document either a) the savings as required by the requirements for extended travel above, b) that no flight was available that same day, or c) a reasonable justification that is approved by the employee's supervisor at the time the travel is authorized. The documentation should be prepared at the time the travel is authorized or flight reservation is made and must be provided to the Auditor's Office at time of submission for reimbursement.
5. If the last scheduled event of a conference or seminar is scheduled to conclude by 5:00 P.M. (Eastern Time), an employee is expected to return that same day unless the employee can document either a) the savings as required by the requirements for extended travel above, or b) that no flight was available that same day, or c) a reasonable justification that is approved by the employee's supervisor at the time the travel is authorized. The documentation should be prepared at the time the travel is authorized or flight reservation is made and must be provided to the Auditor's Office at time of submission for reimbursement.

E. OVERNIGHT TRAVEL – REGISTRATION FEES

1. Reimbursement is authorized for registration fees associated with a conference or event associated with travel. Registration fees may also be paid directly by the County in advance. These fees must be included in the purchase order requesting authorization for travel and reimbursement of expenses, and is not to be paid prior to this authorization. A separate purchase order shall not be opened solely for the purpose of paying registration fees associated with overnight travel without providing the detail of the other expenses associated with the travel.
2. In addition to the receipt submitted for reimbursement under this section, the proper evidentiary matter submitted to the Auditor's office must include the agenda or itinerary of the conference or event.
3. If a charge for alcoholic beverages is included in the registration fee for the conference or event, that cost must be deducted from the reimbursement request.
4. Both the employee and the employee's management are responsible for ensuring that no alcoholic beverages are purchased and consumed under this section. The signatures on the Employee Reimbursement Request form certify that no alcoholic beverages were included in the registration fee for the conference or event.

F. TRAVEL BY AIRPLANE

1. Out of County travel by airplane is authorized at the lowest logical rate, taking advantage of early reservation discounts wherever possible, and includes reimbursement of any reasonable baggage fees (no more than two bags each way). The determination of the lowest rate can include the savings associated with the reduction in travel time in selecting a nonstop flight. The purchase of a ticket through a travel agent shall be deemed to be at the lowest available rate, and includes reimbursement of any associated service fees.
2. The County will allow payment directly to travel agents or airlines in advance of the travel date. Reimbursement to employees may also be made prior to the travel date if the employee has paid for the tickets in advance and can provide documentation to that effect.
3. In cases where a trip is cancelled and the airline processes a travel voucher/airline credit in lieu of a refund, the employee may still be reimbursed for the expenses incurred in purchasing that ticket. The travel voucher/airline credit should only be used on a subsequent business trip authorized by agency management and the Board of Commissioners. If the employee desires to use the travel voucher/airline credit for personal use, the employee may purchase the travel voucher/airline credit by reimbursing the County for the original amount of the ticket. Agency management is responsible for the managing and tracking of proper use of travel vouchers/airline credits.
4. Requests to travel by personal vehicle where travel by airplane is the most efficient means may be authorized only where the employee can document a cost savings over the lowest available fare, or is willing to accept reimbursement of travel costs equal to those that would have been incurred by the lowest advance purchase fare. Where such travel arrangements result in additional travel time, the employee shall charge this additional time to his/her vacation or other accumulated leave balances (excluding sick leave).

G. OVERNIGHT TRAVEL – TRAVEL BY VEHICLE

1. County-owned Vehicles - Employees who are authorized or required to operate a County-owned vehicle must have a valid driver's license. For travel in a County-owned vehicle, the total cost of gasoline and oil shall be reimbursed upon the submittal of receipts, after the employee's management verifies the reasonableness of the costs incurred. A copy of the Fleet Management logbook indicating the odometer readings supporting the miles driven shall be completed for all trips and shall accompany requests for reimbursement of gasoline.
2. Employees are encouraged to contact Fleet Management at 525-3412 for the use of a pool vehicle. When use of a pool vehicle is not practicable, travel by privately-owned vehicle is permissible if the owner is insured under a policy of liability insurance, and the driver has a valid driver's license.
3. Mileage is reimbursable at the standard mileage rate established by the IRS for business expenses. Reimbursement shall be made to only one of two or more County employees traveling in the same privately-owned automobile. The names of all persons traveling in the same privately-owned automobile should be listed on the "Request for Authorization to Travel on County Business" form. The total reimbursable mileage for the trip is equal to the lesser of:
 - a) The distance from the individual's workplace to the destination, and back to the individual's workplace.
 - b) The distance from the individual's place of residence to the destination, and back to the individual's place of residence.

"Proper evidentiary matter", such as MapQuest Directions, will need to be submitted with the Employee Reimbursement Request form to the Auditor's Office.
4. Travel during on-duty hours must utilize the most direct route unless an alternate route would be less time consuming and/or more effective. During on-duty hours, employees shall not deviate from the route of travel or stop along the route of travel to conduct personal business or engage in any activity that is not within their assigned or required duties.
5. Reimbursement is authorized for parking charges, highway tolls, and other reasonable travel expenses directly related to the authorized travel.
6. Reimbursement for mileage and other travel by vehicle expenses associated with overnight travel is to be processed by the Auditor's Office rather than the employing agency's payroll department.

H. MEALS AND INCIDENTALS

1. Reimbursement for meals and incidentals is authorized only when overnight lodging is required while the employee is on official travel status (see Section D). The reimbursement of meals and incidentals is designed to offset the additional cost of travel, and not to entirely pay for the employee's meal and incidental expenses while on authorized travel status.
2. Reimbursement for meals and incidentals shall be made based on a \$44 "per diem" or allowance for each full day of travel, which is considered reasonable.
3. Reimbursement for the first and last day that an employee is on authorized travel status will be \$33, which is 75 percent of the full per diem amount.
4. The per-diem allowance cannot under any circumstances be used to pay for entertainment or alcoholic beverages, nor any tax or gratuity associated with such purchase.
5. Reimbursement for meals shall be made on the Employee Reimbursement Request form. Meal receipts are not required to be submitted to the Auditor's office for the employee to receive reimbursement. However, a copy of the flight schedule or hotel bill, along with a conference agenda or other document demonstrating the dates of travel are required as proper evidentiary matter.

I. LODGING

1. Reimbursement for lodging shall be at the actual cost for the lowest available room rate. Every attempt should be made to reduce the cost of lodging, such as requesting the government or federal per-diem rate listed by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), membership, or conference discounts, room sharing when appropriate, etc. Lodging accommodations should be appropriate for the proposed trip.
2. In addition, reimbursement is authorized for any associated hotel, lodging, or other taxes and service fees associated with the lodging.
3. Each County agency, court, board, and/or commission shall be responsible for determining whether the lodging expenses submitted for reimbursement are reasonable and appropriate.
4. Approval is also given for direct payment to the lodging facility; an employee must present a bill from the facility in order to pay for the lodging in advance. Reimbursement to employees may also be made prior to the travel date if the employee has paid for the lodging in advance and can provide documentation to that effect.
5. Lodging costs will not be reimbursed when incurred at a lodging facility located within sixty-five (65) miles of the closer of either the employee's normal work location or official residence. Exceptions to this policy may be made in cases of severe inclement weather, or when the employee has provided a reasonable justification that is approved by the employee's supervisor at the time the travel is authorized.

J. TRANSPORTATION

1. Reimbursement is authorized for transportation expenses, such as public transportation, shuttle service, ridesharing, or taxi fares. Every attempt should be made to reduce the cost of transportation, such as sharing taxi fares when appropriate. Transportation expenses should be appropriate for the proposed trip.
2. Eligible transportation expenses authorized under this section include:
 - a) Travel between the airport and the place of lodging, conference, or other event;
 - b) Travel between the place of lodging and the conference or event when the conference or event is not on the same premises as the place of lodging;
 - c) Travel between a business-related meeting and the place of lodging, conference, or other event; and
 - d) Travel between airport and place of residence.
3. The amount of reimbursement may include a tip or gratuity associated with the transportation expense, which is expected to be reasonable. A tip or gratuity of approximately 20% is generally accepted as reasonable, but may vary depending on the situation.
4. Each County agency, court, board, and/or commission shall be responsible for determining whether the transportation expenses submitted for reimbursement are reasonable and appropriate.
5. All receipts submitted for reimbursement under this section shall include the point of origin and the destination. For travel to or from a business-related meeting at a restaurant, the proper evidentiary matter submitted to the Auditor's office must include either an agenda or confirmation from the official of attendance at the meeting with the employee.
6. Reimbursement for rental cars is permissible when the out-of-county lodging is not proximate to the conference location, more economical than any other type of transportation, public transportation is not available, and transportation between facilities is not provided by the conference. Reimbursement shall not be made at the luxury or large vehicle rate (i.e., reimbursement shall be made for a compact, standard, or mid-size sedan), except that a large vehicle may be reimbursed if the number of travelers accommodated warrants a larger vehicle. The names of all persons traveling in the same rental vehicle shall be listed on the "Request for Authorization to Travel on County Business" form.

K. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

1. Reimbursement is authorized for other reasonable and business-related expenses, such as internet access at the place of lodging and telephone expenses, including one safety/arrival long distance phone call upon arrival at the destination (not to exceed two minutes). However, employees should make their best effort to minimize the expense by using calling cards or cell phones rather than using hotel room phone rates.
2. Since it is not possible to anticipate every travel potentiality that might arise, either before or during authorized travel, requests for reimbursements that vary from the above guidelines will be addressed on a case by case basis by the County Administrator, Deputy County Administrator, or OMB Director. However, it is anticipated that such cases will be rare.

L. REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

1. Requests for reimbursement of travel expenses shall be documented on the "Employee Reimbursement Request" form. A copy of that form is attached for agency convenience, but please refer to the Auditor's Fiscally Speaking website (<http://www.franklincountyauditor.com/fiscally-speaking/>), for the most current copy of that form as it may change from time to time.
2. **The Employee Reimbursement Request form must be accompanied by proper evidentiary matter as determined by the Auditor's Office.** Please refer to the Auditor's Office procedure for employee reimbursements for specifics.
3. Each County agency, court, board, and/or commission shall be responsible for the submission of a voucher for reimbursement of the travel expenses of their employees. **The employee's management is responsible for ensuring that the expenses listed are appropriate for the travel and meet the travel policy requirements contained herein.**
4. Except as mentioned in this policy, no payments will be made for expenses in advance of the trip.
5. **The employee's management authorizing the travel expenses is responsible for reviewing these requests, and ensuring that the travel expenses are reasonable and appropriate before approving the reimbursement.**
6. The Employee Reimbursement Request form must be submitted to the Auditor's Office in a timely manner (generally within 90 days from when the authorized travel status ends). However, due to the schedule for processing travel reimbursements, the need to provide additional evidentiary matter, or other reasonable justification, reimbursement may be made after the 90 days from when the authorized travel status ends.

**REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO
TRAVEL ON COUNTY BUSINESS**

Name of Meeting: _____

Dates of Authorized Travel: _____

Place and Address of Meeting: _____

Personnel Attending: _____

	<u>Cost Per Person</u>		<u>Number of People</u>		<u>Number of Days</u>		<u>Total Cost</u>
Registration Fee	\$ _____	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
Air Fare	\$ _____	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
Lodging	\$ _____	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
First Day	\$ <u>33</u>	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
Full Day	\$ <u>44</u>	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
Last Day	\$ <u>33</u>	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
Transportation	\$ _____	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
Other / Misc.	\$ _____	x	_____	x	_____	=	\$ _____
Total Trip Mileage:	_____	x	_____	\$ _____	per mile	=	\$ _____
Total Amount Requested							\$ _____

If mileage reimbursement is requested:

Was a request made for use of a County-owned vehicle: ____ Yes ____ No

Reason for not using a County-owned vehicle: _____

Requested By:

Authorized By:

Signature Date

Signature Date

Title

Title

Additional Comments _____

**EMPLOYEE REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST**

ALL PERTINENT DOCUMENTATION MUST BE ATTACHED SUCH AS AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL FORM, ITEMIZED RECEIPTS, DETAILED INVOICES, CONFERENCE BROCHURE, MAPQUEST OR GOOGLE MAP TO DOCUMENT MILEAGE, GSA PER DIEM RATES FOR DESTINATION CITY, OR GRADE REPORT FOR TUITION REIMBURSEMENT.

Employee #: [Enter Employee ID#]

Employee Name: [Enter Employee Name]

Purchase Order #: [Enter PO#]

Destination: [Enter Destination]

Purpose: [Enter Conference Name/Purpose]

Travel Dates From: [Enter From Date]

To: [Enter To Date]

TO BE COMPLETED BY EMPLOYEE AND AGENCY REVIEWER/APPROVER.

		Completed by Employee	Completed by Authorized Personnel	Reason for Difference/Explanation for Other Expense	
		Receipt Amounts OR Per Diem	Eligible for Reimbursement	Difference	
Registration Fee		\$ -	\$ -	-	
Travel	Airfare	-	-	-	
	Mileage	-	-	-	
	Baggage	-	-	-	
	Ground Transportation	-	-	-	
	Car Rental	-	-	-	
	Gas for Rental Car	-	-	-	
	Airport Parking	-	-	-	
	Total Travel	\$ -	\$ -	-	
Lodging (Rate x Nights)		\$ -	\$ -	-	
Meals and Incidentals (\$44.00 per diem for each full day; \$33.00 for first and last day of travel)					
[Enter Date]	Daily Total	-	-	-	
[Enter Date]	Daily Total	-	-	-	
[Enter Date]	Daily Total	-	-	-	
[Enter Date]	Daily Total	-	-	-	
[Enter Date]	Daily Total	-	-	-	
[Enter Date]	Daily Total	-	-	-	
[Enter Date]	Daily Total	-	-	-	
Meals Total		\$ -	\$ -	-	
Other Expenses (list individually & explain purpose)					
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
Total Other Expenses		\$ -	\$ -	-	
Grand Total		\$ -	\$ -	-	

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE*

DATE

*Your signature certifies that the expenses listed on this request were incurred and are claimed in accordance with your agency's reimbursement policies.

AUTHORIZED BY**

DATE

**Your signature certifies that you have reviewed the expenses listed on this request for reasonableness, proper public purpose, and compliance with your agency's reimbursement policies.