

Document Code No.: PER-17-1-4-EP

Title: Authorized Travel, Travel Expense and Miscellaneous Reimbursements for King County Employees

Affected Agencies: All King County Agencies using the Oracle EBS Financial and Concur systems

Authorities: King County Code 2.16, 3.12,3.24

Keywords: Travel, Transportation, Lodging, Per Diem, iExpense

Sponsoring Agency: Department of Executive Services, Finance and Business Operations Division

Type of Action: Supersedes PER 17-1-3 (AEP), January 12, 2012



King County

Executive signature: Dow Constantine

Date signed and effective: 12.28.20

I. Purpose

This Policy is for County travel, travel expense, and miscellaneous reimbursements by County employees to ensure King County's resources are expended in a manner that maximizes the public benefit. The purpose of this Policy is to: (1) outline the circumstances under which King County employees will be authorized to travel and receive travel reimbursement; (2) designate the authorities for approval; and (3) address authorization and reimbursement for miscellaneous expenses. Adherence to these guidelines will maximize King County's ability to negotiate discounted rates with preferred suppliers and reduce travel expenses. King County reserves the right to change this Policy at any time without prior notice, and the guidelines and procedures described in this Policy may not cover every possible situation. Travelers should clarify and receive prior approval for any exception as needed. Germane to this policy revision is the introduction of King County's new travel and reimbursement system (Concur). Please note it's references herein.

Applicability and Audience This Policy applies to the Administrative Offices and Executive Branch Departments supervised by the King County Executive. The audience may also include any King County non-Executive Branch Departments adopting this Policy.

II. Definitions

"Approver" – a County Division Director or Department Director or Department/Division delegate who approves expense reports on behalf of their employees.

"Concur" – King County's Travel and Travel Expense Reimbursement system.

"Day travel" – travel outside of King County that exceeds six hours but does not include an overnight stay. Travel outside of King County for six hours or less or travel within the County is not considered day travel.

"Delegate" – any person who prepares or submits an Expense Report on another employee's behalf, such as an Executive Assistant.

"Designee" – Department Director, Deputy Department Director, or Deputy Division Director as defined in KCC 2.16.

"Emergency" – the occurrence of unforeseen or urgent circumstances that may result in harm to the public good.

“Employee” – any person employed in a career service, term-limited, or an exempt position as defined in KCC 3.12, except persons serving King County without compensation and members of boards and commissions. "Employee" includes all King County elected officials.

“Federal lodging limit” – the maximum amount a federal employee may be reimbursed per day for lodging expenses, excluding applicable taxes, in the respective host city for travel within the continental United States as published in the Code of Federal Regulations, 41CFR §301, App. A, and as hereafter amended.

“Government rates” – discounted rates offered to government employees while conducting official business by lodging establishments, rental car agencies, and other providers of services to government employees.

“Lowest Logical Fare” – Lowest available coach class travel with reasonable connections and total travel time.

“Official King County business” – relates directly to a person's work function and benefits King County.

“Oracle EBS” – King County’s non-travel related reimbursements and issuing of the warrants.

“Overnight travel” – travel outside of King County that exceeds twelve hours and includes an overnight stay.

“Policy or Travel and Expense Policy” – refers to this document titled “Authorized Travel, Meal, and Expense Reimbursement for King County Employees,” the overall Travel and Expense Policy for King County.

“P&P” refers to the Procurement & Payables Section, which is part of the Finance and Business Operations Division within the Department of Executive Services.

“P&P P-Card Manual” refers to a document created and maintained by the Procurement & Payables Section that provides guidance and best business practices to ensure P-Card purchases are managed in compliance with King County policies and procedures.

“P&P Travel Guide” refers to a document created and maintained by the Procurement & Payables Section that provides guidance and best business practices to ensure the end-to-end travel processes and T-Card purchases are managed in compliance with King County policies and procedures.

“Presiding Elected Official” – King County Executive for the executive branch departments, agencies, and offices. Other branches of government may utilize this Policy; if so, the presiding elected official shall be that of the government’s respective branch.

Travel Card – credit card for King County employees to use for allowable business expenses, including lodging, airfare, and rental car, while in travel status.

III. Policy

A. Responsibilities

1. Employee
 - a. Any employees who are required to travel on King County business must be familiar with and act according with this Policy.
 - b. Employees are responsible for exercising the same care in incurring expenses and accomplishing the travel purpose that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional guidance.
2. Delegate
 - a. An authorized delegate may prepare and submit an Expense Report on behalf of another employee, but they may not approve reports on that user's behalf.
3. Department Directors and Division Directors
 - a. As an approver, Department Directors and Division Directors are responsible for ensuring that travel is obtained at an economical price, is consistent with policies outlined herein, and that adequate documentation of travel and expenses incurred is maintained in Concur for their direct reports. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional guidance.
4. Finance and Business Operations Division
 - a. Responsible for writing and circulating administrative policies and procedures consistent with KC Ordinance 13257.
5. Procurement and Payables
 - a. Responsible for periodically verifying Concur expense reports and backup documentation.
 - b. Responsible for processing and distribution of warrants.

B. Eligibility and Applicability

This Policy applies to King County employees authorized to travel on behalf of the County.

C. General Travel Rules

1. All persons shall exercise prudent judgment to avoid unnecessary King County expense. Travel requests and reimbursement claims shall strictly conform to the provisions of this Policy and other applicable law, grants, contracts, or policies. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional guidance.
2. Alternatives to Travel - E-Meetings, teleconferences, and videoconferences can be effective alternatives to travel and represent an opportunity to significantly reduce travel costs, as well as reduce King County's impact on the environment, and should be considered as an alternative to travel.

D. Travel Arrangements

All travel including air, hotel, car rental, and rail must be booked through King County's online booking tool, Concur, or directly through the contracted Travel Management Company (TMC), by designated personnel or the employee traveling.

1. Coach class of travel is King County standard.
2. All air, hotel, car rental, and rail expenses should be charged to a King County Travel Card whenever possible.
3. Reservations made through alternative sources such as Expedia and Orbitz are not allowed.

E. Risk Management

1. For employees traveling together, King County has limited travel amongst the following groups to ensure continuity of business with key personnel:
 - a. Not more than three from Department Heads.
 - b. Not more than five direct reports to any Department Head.
 - c. Any exceptions to the above must be approved in writing by the Risk Management Department.
2. Domestic and International Travel Advisories:
 - a. Safety and security are of primary importance when employees are traveling on King County business. Therefore, when local Government agencies issue advisories that restrict travel for safety or health purposes, employee travel may be cancelled or postponed.

F. Travel Authorization/Concur Request

1. Travel authorization for day or overnight travel shall be subject to approval by the King County Executive or his/her designee or a department/division director or designee, by following the established policies and procedures before the employee commencing the activity in Concur.
2. Emergency travel must be authorized by following paragraph F.1 within twenty-four hours of departure.
3. If expenses are incurred without prior approval within Concur, and no emergency existed, payments will not be reimbursed.
4. Persons authorizing travel shall not be the requester or a subordinate to the requester, except for King County Executive, whose travel is approved by the Deputy County Executive or the Director of Performance, Strategy and Budget.
5. Travel authorization for any person who maintains King County employment/business status is required even if King County is not paying for the travel expenses (e.g., an employee on County business or representing King County is invited to be a speaker at a conference and the conference sponsor is paying for the employee expenses).

G. Air Travel

1. When booking air travel, an employee should select a flight based on the Lowest Logical Fare (LLF), the lowest available Coach Class travel with reasonable connections, and total travel time via Concur or contracted Travel Management Company (TMC).
2. Airline tickets are issued in Coach/Economy Class only for all domestic business travel and international travel to Canada and Mexico. Domestic business travel

includes all trips in the continental United States, Puerto Rico, and other Caribbean islands.

- a. If a domestic flight exceeds 5 hours of flight time, the employee may travel Economy Plus.
 - b. International flights that exceed 7 hours of flight time, the employee may travel Business Class.
3. Employees may maintain Frequent Flyer membership with any airline at their own expense; however, participation in these programs must not influence flight selection that would result an incremental cost to King County beyond the lowest available airfare, as required by this Policy.
 - a. Employees will not be reimbursed for a monetary value when mileage/points from these programs are used to book flights for King County business.
 4. Excess baggage, change of flight, and inflight internet service for business use fees are reimbursable if incurred due to business reasons.
 5. Transportation to/from the Airport/Airport Parking
 - a. The employee should determine the most economical and suitable mode of transportation. A King County employee will be reimbursed for personal vehicle mileage using Internal Revenue Service (IRS) standard mileage rates and airport parking expenses.

H. Lodging

1. If a person is in overnight travel status, a traveler may not book lodging if they are within a reasonable commuting distance from the destination.
2. King County follows the federal lodging limits, as published by the US General Services Administration.
3. Upgrades at the expense of King County are not permitted and considered non-reimbursable expenses. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional information.
4. For seminars, conferences or conventions, an authorized approver may approve costs for lodging at the event site in excess of the federal lodging limit for the host city under the following conditions:
 - a. No alternate lodging is available within a reasonable distance of the event site, within the federal lodging limit for the host city.
 - b. The authorized means of transportation between the alternate lodging site and the event site exceed the savings in lodging costs.
 - c. The presiding elected official or department/division director or designee has authorized the excess expenditure through the request module of Concur.

I. Transportation

1. King County shall pay the actual and necessary costs of transportation while conducting official King County business as follows:
 - a. Travel shall be by the transportation method and route most advantageous to King County, considering the cost of transportation and other travel expenses.
2. Traffic and parking violations while traveling on King County business are non-reimbursable.
3. Car rentals shall be intermediate or smaller-sized vehicles unless business needs call for large vehicle, will be authorized only if the cost of public transportation or taxi/rideshare services is not practical or economical. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional information.

4. Personal Car Usage

- a. When the use of a private automobile is authorized, mileage reimbursement shall be at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rate per mile for business-related travel, and reimbursement for parking shall be the actual cost, except as provided by a collective bargaining agreement, prevailing law or contract.
 - b. When the use of a private automobile is authorized, the mileage included from the person's home and permanently assigned workplace shall be deducted before reimbursement for business-related travel. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional information.
5. Taxi, Rideshare, and Other Car Services are allowed when economic means are not practical. The reimbursement may include actual cost and gratuity up to 20% after all discounts and/or promotions have been deducted.
6. Parking while traveling for business or as required for King County events is reimbursable.
7. Tolls, bus, and ferry fees are reimbursable expenses as required by business travel or events on behalf of King County.

J. Per Diem Meal and Incidental Rates

1. King County will reimburse an authorized employee up to the GSA meal per diem rate excluding, any meals provided by conference, events and hotels for each day or overnight travel. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional information.

K. Non-Travel Meals and Refreshments

1. Reimbursable Meal and Refreshment Expenses
 - a. King County will reimburse authorized emergency meals and refreshments as defined in King County Ordinance 19033.
 - b. Meals/Refreshments may be provided for routine staff meetings or employee engagement events lasting less than four hours for less than a hundred dollars, if approved prior to meeting by department or division director or designee. See P&P P-Card Manual for additional information.
 - c. Meals/Refreshments, for meetings lasting over four hours, may be provided to employees subject to department/division director or designee's approval.
 - (i) The total cost per meal shall be limited to fifty percent of the fixed lunch meal allowance established by the federal travel regulations and refreshments up to \$5 for each participant.

L. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

1. Non-Reimbursable Meal and Refreshment Expenses
 - a. They were included in another King County expense, regardless of whether the person partakes in the meal or refreshment. See P&P P-Card Manual for additional information.
 - b. It is enacted for recreational or social events such as employee going away events, employee retirement parties, or other personalized social events.
 - c. A violation of the State Constitution, Article VIII, Section 7, which prohibits a gift of public funds, would occur.
2. Non-Reimbursable Travel Expenses
 - a. Miscellaneous travel expenses not directly related to conducting official King County business and excessive or unnecessary expenses are not reimbursable. Certain expenses are considered personal and therefore non-reimbursable including, but not limited to transportation to places of entertainment or similar personal activities; clothing, personal sundries and services; private trip insurance; medical, dental and hospital services; alcoholic beverages; tobacco products; fines and penalties; travel fees such as TSA Pre, Clear, Visa and Global Entry
3. Travel and Expenses incurred by a spouse, companion, or other individuals accompanying a King County employee on business travel are non-reimbursable.
4. Subscriptions, dues, and memberships, when not approved as integral to the employee job description, including, but not necessarily limited to the following: postage and shipping of personal items; gifts and gift cards; any entertainment expense such as a sporting event; charitable donations; cell phone and home internet charges; and dependent care, except as provided through King County employee benefits program.

M. Travel Expense Advances

1. It is the Executive's intent to phase out the need for travel expense advances by the end of the second Quarter of 2021 and only allow them for exceptional circumstances when authorized by the Chief Procurement Officer. This is because travel expense advances create administrative inefficiencies and are generally considered obsolete when employees have access to a Travel Card. See the P&P Travel Guide for additional information.
2. Travel expense advances shall not, under any circumstances, be considered a personal loan to the employee, and any expenditure thereof, other than for official King County business purposes, shall be regarded as a misappropriation of King County funds.
3. King County employees who are delinquent in accounting for or repaying a prior travel expense advance or interest shall be ineligible for any additional advances until repayment or acceptable justification for the delinquent advance has been made.

N. Rental of Conference Room

1. Rental of a conference room in a hotel or other facility is allowed when used to transact official King County business, provided that a King County-owned/leased room is unavailable.

O. Lobbyist Per Diem In lieu of Reimbursement

1. Any expense an employee would otherwise be reimbursed for shall be a legal obligation of an expenditure by King County when incurred in the course of "lobbying," as defined in RCW 42.17.020(18), or in the course of providing requested information to an official or officials of another government agency.
2. Any employee of King County, when assigned to a session of the Washington State legislature as a full time "lobbyist" as defined in RCW 42.17.020(19), shall be authorized to receive, in place of meals and incidentals and lodging cost reimbursements provided for in this chapter, an allowance for each consecutive day of a session at a rate equivalent to that authorized for members of the Washington State legislature per RCW 44.04.120.

P. Board of Health Members

1. Members of the Board of Health who are not full-time elected officials may be reimbursed for mileage and parking expenses between the member's workplace or residence and the location of the Board of Health meeting. Members may be compensated for travel expenses, including lodging, meals and incidentals per diem and transportation at the GSA rate.

Q. Expense Reporting and Reimbursement

1. The approver of expense reimbursements shall not approve another subdivision's expenses in violation of RCW 43.09.210.
2. Repayment of unauthorized reimbursements:
 - a. The Finance and Business Operations Division shall seek repayment of expenses from the individual who was reimbursed whenever an audit or subsequent review of travel expense reimbursements finds that such payments were reimbursed contrary to the provisions of KCC 3.24 or this Policy.
3. In cases where another source reimburses the travel expenses and where King County Policy provides for greater total reimbursement, King County may pay the difference between the amount within King County Policy and the total amount reimbursed from the other source for expenses if approved by elected official or department/division director or designee. The payment shall be limited to items that are reimbursable under the provisions of this Policy and for the total amount, not particular items with differing reimbursement rates. See P&P Travel Guide for additional information.

IV. Implementation Plan

- A.** This policy becomes effective for all Agencies on the date that it is signed by the Executive. The Finance and Business Operations Division is responsible for the implementation of this Policy.

- B. The Finance and Business Operations Division is responsible for communicating this Policy to senior leaders and employees within their respective agencies and other appropriate parties.

V. Maintenance

- A. This Policy is maintained by Finance and Business Operations Division or its successor agency.
- B. This Policy will automatically expire five (5) years after its effective date. A new, revised, or renewed Policy will be initiated by the Finance and Business Operations Division or its successor agency before the expiration date.

VI. Consequences for Noncompliance

Any agency in noncompliance with this Policy shall submit a letter of justification and remediation plan signed by the Chief Procurement Officer or designee to the Chief Procurement Officer for review and action.

Consequences for non-compliance with federal funding regulations

If an auditing authority finds a grantee to be in violation of federal procurement policies, the federal granting authority may no longer grant funds and require the County to pay back all disallowed costs.

Appendices:

- A. Link to P&P [Travel Guide](#)
- B. Link to P&P [P-Card Manual](#)