



# Department of Veterans Affairs

## Financial Policy

### Volume XIV

#### Travel

### Chapter 1

#### Travel Administration

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<b>0101 OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>0102 POLICIES .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>0103 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>0104 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>0105 PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>0106 DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>0107 RESCISSIONS.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>0108 QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>0109 REVISIONS.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: PURPOSE FOR TRAVEL.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: NO COST TRAVEL AUTHORITY.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: PROCEDURES TO REIMBURSE TRAVEL EXPENSES VIA EFT .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: PROCEDURES FOR COMBINING PERSONAL/UNOFFICIAL TRAVEL WITH OFFICIAL TRAVEL .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: NON-FEDERAL-SPONSORED TRAVEL .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: PRE-EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW PROCEDURES.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>APPENDIX G: TRAVEL ENTITLEMENTS FOR UNIQUE VA EMPLOYEES.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDIX H: PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING AN OUTSTANDING TRAVEL ADVANCE .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>APPENDIX I: RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>APPENDIX J: PROCEDURES FOR ALTERNATE SUBMISSION OF A TRAVEL CLAIM.....</b>	<b>50</b>

## 0101 OVERVIEW

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial policies and procedures regarding travel administration and provides the authoritative reference for VA travel management. It contains VA policy and procedures for managing travel by VA personnel, invitational travelers, contractors, and witnesses. The chapter also implements and supplements those portions of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) pertaining to temporary duty travel. The FTR is the Government regulation that implements statutory requirements and Executive Branch policies for travel by Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at Government expense ([41 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\), Chapters 300 through 304](#)).

Union rights and privileges related to travel expenses, as defined in Union agreements, do not supersede the regulations contained in the FTR.

The following topics are covered in this chapter:

- [010201 Travel Approval, Training and Authorization](#)
- [010202 Pre-Employment Interview and Invitational Travel](#)
- [010203 Blanket Travel Authorizations](#)
- [010204 Travel Advances](#)
- [010205 Travel Reimbursement Policies and Procedures](#)
- [010206 Use of the Travel Charge Card](#)

VA will limit the authorization and payment of travel expenses to travel that is necessary to accomplish the Department's mission and is most economical and effective. Consideration will be given to, but is not limited to, budget constraints, adherence to travel policies, environmental impact and reasonableness of expenses. VA will always consider alternatives (e.g., teleconferencing) before approving travel ([41 C.F.R. § 301-70.1](#)).

## 0102 POLICIES

### 010201 TRAVEL APPROVAL, TRAINING AND AUTHORIZATION

#### A. Approval.

1. Employees traveling on official business must obtain approval from a direct line supervisor<sup>[1]</sup> or an approving official holding a higher-level position in the employee's direct line organizational structure in advance of their trip. Evidence of the approval shall be uploaded or captured electronically in VA's travel system when a travel

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<sup>[1]</sup>NOTE: The direct-line supervisor may provide a one-time blanket approval to the employee for multiple travel episodes involving a specific project or detail. The Approving Official in VA's travel system is responsible for ensuring the travel authorization meets FTR and Vol XIV Travel chapter policy requirements.

authorization is created and/or approved. If Delegations of Authority are required regarding certain travel-related actions in this chapter, they must follow the guidance set forth in [VA Directive 0000, Delegation of Authority](#).

2. No VA employee may approve his or her own travel, nor may a travel arranger approve the travel expenses prepared on behalf of a traveler. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Staff Office Directors, the General Counsel, Inspector General, and Facility/VISN/Regional Directors will delegate the authority to approve their travel to a senior-level official in their organization.
3. Each employee who approves, directs or performs travel will exercise diligence and practice economy in all matters involving travel costs. Travel will be conducted at Government expense in accordance with statutory requirements and VA policy.
4. For additional guidance and approval when traveling to a conference, reference VA [Corporate Travel Management and Reporting Office Website](#), and [Vol XIV Ch. 10, Conference Planning, Oversight, and Reporting](#).

#### B. Training

All employees, supervisors and approving officials are responsible for ensuring they follow VA travel policy and Federal Travel Regulations for official travel.

1. Officials delegated to approve employee travel, and supervisors of employees performing the travel are required to:
  - a. Complete travel training offered in the Training Management System (TMS) or other similar travel training offered outside of TMS. If training is conducted outside of TMS, the employee is responsible for documenting the training in TMS to ensure centralized record keeping;
  - b. Ensure that their employees have taken and are current with the required travel training;
  - c. Instruct their subordinates of their rights, privileges and responsibilities in the performance of, and reimbursement for, official travel.
2. Officials may contact the Financial Services Center (FSC) VA-Wide TDY Travel Support Group for training session(s). These sessions are available regularly with a training schedule posted on the FSC VA-Wide TDY Travel website at [FSC E Gov Travel Service 2](#). Customers may arrange a customized on-site training session by contacting the FSC VA-Wide TDY Travel Support Group at 866-533--0188 or via email at [vafscetravel@va.gov](mailto:vafscetravel@va.gov). Until the FSC training is linked or contained in TMS, the FSC training will need to be documented and uploaded into the employee's TMS account.

3. A 30-day grace period (beginning from the return travel date) will be granted to employees who are unable to accomplish training prior to beginning their official travel due to one of the following reasons.

- A new employee is required to go on immediate training at the start of his/her employment; or
- An employee who receives short notice of his/her temporary duty travel. Short notice is defined as less than one week.

4. Approving Officials (AOs) must maintain a current training status. AOs will not have authority to approve travel authorizations if their training status is not current.

### C. Authorization

1. All employee travel, including emergency travel requires advance approval, in accordance with [Section 010201A](#). All travel authorizations in VA's travel system will be approved by an AO before travel is performed.

2. In the case of an emergency, AO approval of a travel authorization in VA's travel system may be completed post trip.

3. A travel authorization is necessary for a traveler to be reimbursed for travel expenses. It identifies the purpose for travel (reference [Appendix A, Purpose for Travel](#)) and generates the travel itinerary and estimated cost of a trip. Amended travel authorities will be issued when the authority in the original authorization is insufficient for the traveler to perform official business or permit the traveler to incur allowable expenses. When prior authorization is not possible or practical, post-trip approval may be issued through an amended travel authorization or on the travel claim. Failure to receive proper authorization may limit or prevent reimbursement of travel expenses.

4. Employees who travel away from their official duty station (e.g., beyond the established local travel area) are required to perform such travel under a travel authority created in VA's travel system.

5. The FTR defines official station as an area defined by the agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) defines the official worksite of a telework employee as the place where they normally work, not their telework location, as long as they are regularly scheduled to be at that site at least twice each bi-weekly pay period. If a telework employee is called into the official station on a telework day, the employee is not entitled to reimbursement for travel to the official station.

a. For permanent, long-term telework arrangements (virtual employees), the official worksite will be reassigned to the telework location. The employee whose official

worksite is reassigned will receive locality pay for the telework worksite, not the original worksite ([OPM Pay Administration - Official Worksite](#)).

b. An employee may receive travel entitlements to the official station if their worksite has been permanently changed to their virtual worksite location. In the event that the official worksite is reassigned to the virtual location, trips to the main worksite are considered "official business" and the employee is entitled to travel reimbursement as appropriate for the time and distance.

6. Local Travel. See [Vol XIV, Ch. 7, Local Travel](#), for information on local travel policies and procedures.

7. [VA Form 3036](#), *Travel Authority for Temporary Duty*, will be issued when travel away from the official station will be required and no travel or per diem expenses will be incurred. Reference [Appendix B, No Cost Travel Authority](#), for the requirements to use VA Form 3036 for no-cost temporary duty (TDY) travel authority, as well as a completed sample form. If the traveler does incur a necessary travel or per diem expense, the no-cost travel authority will be voided for that episode of travel and a new trip-by-trip travel authorization will be created in the travel system. For manual travel authorizations, the document numbering, processing and records retention must follow established fiscal procedures.

8. Whenever possible, the travel of an employee away from his or her official station will be scheduled within the employee's regular duty hours. Compensation for travel outside of the employee's regular duty hours will be in accordance with [VA Handbook 5011, Hours of Duty and Leave](#), Part II, Chapters 2 and 3, and [VA Handbook 5007, Pay Administration, Chapter 15, Compensatory Time Off for Travel](#). The employee's supervisor should confer with the Office of Human Resources to determine the appropriateness of any compensation.

9. VA will reduce the traveler's Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) per diem rate to a flat rate when the travel assignment involves extended stays and the traveler is able to obtain lodging and/or meals at lower costs. The flat rate is equal to 55 percent of the M&IE per diem rate. [Reference Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#), for additional information on reduced per diem.

10. Employees on extended temporary duty lasting more than 6 months may be authorized a temporary change of station (TCS). A TCS will be for at least 6 months but will not last more than 30 months. A TCS is intended to improve employee satisfaction, enhance morale, and reduce income tax liability (from extended temporary duty assignments) and overall cost to the Government. [Reference Vol XIV Ch. 8, Relocation Packages](#), for additional information on both temporary and permanent changes of station.

D. Travel System.

1. Under no circumstance shall a VA employee use another VA employee's credentials to access VA's travel system with the intent to submit a travel claim that is not their own or to perform system assigned roles not assigned to them, on behalf of another VA employee. In accordance with [18 U.S.C. § 1030, Fraud and related activity in connection with computers](#), unauthorized or fraudulent access to government computer systems may subject you to a fine of up to \$5,000 or double the value of anything obtained via this unauthorized access, plus up to five years imprisonment.

2. Travelers, travel arrangers, and AO's must ensure advance approval is obtained, in accordance with [Section 010201A](#).

3. Document preparers (travelers and travel arrangers) will use the travel system to prepare and route TDY travel authorizations; to make reservations including transportation, lodging, and rental car, and to process all TDY and local travel claims. Approving officials will use the travel system to review and approve all TDY travel authorizations and TDY or local travel claims. Reference [Appendix C, Procedures to Reimburse Travel Expenses via Electronic Funds Transfer \(EFT\)](#). The traveler will have an approved travel authorization for official travel prior to departure. Authorizations are not complete until the document successfully routes through the travel system. Returned authorizations will be corrected and re-signed to begin routing for approval. Printed travel authorizations are not required for record retention or audit purposes if the documents are processed electronically in the travel system. However, if the travel authorization from the direct line supervisor is not in VA's travel system, the approval will be retained by the employee for audit purposes.

4. Access to the travel system is limited to VA employees and invitational travelers for official travel. Travelers will log into the travel system and submit their travel claims upon completion of their TDY. An invitational traveler may sign a hard copy of the travel claim provided to them by travel arrangers as another option. Reference [Section 010205](#) for guidance on alternate submission. The FSC VA-Wide TDY Travel Support Group Help Desk is available to assist organizations with preparing invitational travel documents. The help desk can be reached at [vafscetravel@va.gov](mailto:vafscetravel@va.gov) or at 866-533-0188.

5. Travelers may contact the travel system provider's call center at 800-356-9513 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., EST, weekdays, except on Federal holidays, for technical support with the travel system. All itineraries include a toll-free telephone number the traveler may call 24/7 while in a travel status. Use of this service may incur an additional expense.

E. Use of VA's Travel System.

1. Employees will purchase transportation tickets for their official travel through VA's travel system. Some advantages of using the travel system are reporting capabilities, emergency tracking of travelers, ensuring Government rates, meeting FTR

requirements and making ticket exchanging easy while on travel. The travel system may not be used for the personal travel route when combined with official travel for temporary duty travel. Personal travel is travel by an indirect route or interruption of a direct route for personal reasons. The travel system will be used for the official travel route of the temporary duty travel. There may be additional costs and penalties associated with using sources other than the travel system, which the traveler will be responsible for paying when arrangements are made or changed for personal reasons and there is no mission requirement.

2. Employees will use electronic tickets when available to reduce travel system service charges. [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#), requires mandatory use of the Centrally Billed Account (CBA) travel card for employee transportation and fees. Travel system transportation and service charges paid by the CBA for official travel are not an itemized reimbursable travel expense directly to the traveler; however, the transportation cost will be reflected in the total cost on the travel claim. The fee will be added to the itinerary after the authorization has been approved and the reservations have been ticketed by the travel system and will be included on the travel claim under the CBA travel card. Fees incurred as a result of changes to the itinerary for personal reasons not related to emergency travel will be the responsibility of the traveler to pay. A bill of collection will be processed to recoup the fees. The employee is responsible for ensuring he or she has been ticketed prior to departure.

3. Employees may contact their local travel office if they need assistance with travel arrangements. Contacting the travel office directly, however, may result in higher fees for reservations.

4. If the travel system becomes unavailable for any reason, employees may complete travel arrangements by contacting the travel office to make reservations. The travel office will complete the travel arrangements and will enter the necessary information into a queue for later processing in the travel system to generate a travel authorization once the system becomes available. Travelers will receive a notification from the travel system to review and complete the travel authorization.

5. Reservations using commercial means available to the general public are not permitted for official travel. Use of a luxury chauffeured car service, such as a limousine, is prohibited. This luxury service does not include airport shuttle or taxi.

6. Amendments to authorization documents are required for changes to any mode of travel including common carrier, date changes that impact reservations made in the travel system or per diem entitlements, and any changes to the transportation cost. Preparers must annotate the reason for the amendment in the comment section of the authorization.

7. Approving officials or travelers will promptly cancel authorizations for cancelled trips to ensure that travel funds are de-obligated in the accounting system. Employees will promptly repay any travel advance issued for cancelled trips.

F. Exceptions for the Use of VA's Travel System or Online Booking Engine (OBE).

1. The head of an agency may grant case-by-case exceptions to the use of the agency's travel system when in accordance with [41 C.F.R. Part 301-50](#). In VA, requests for exceptions will be submitted in writing to the Office of the Secretary (00) through the Office of Financial Policy (047GA3). Requests will contain a business case analysis that justifies why the travel system cannot be used. The Office of the Secretary will report agency exceptions to the Administrator, General Services Administration, 1800 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20405 with full justification and/or analysis, addressing the criteria in [41 C.F.R. Chapter 301](#).

2. Employees will use the OBE offered by the travel system to reserve transportation, lodging and official rental cars. Listed below are the extenuating circumstances in which a traveler is authorized an exception from using the OBE. Preparers should enter a comment on the travel authorization explaining the applicable extenuating circumstance.

a. When attending a conference where the conference sponsor has negotiated with one or more lodging facilities to set aside a specific number of rooms for conference attendees and, to ensure that a set-aside room is available, travelers are required to book lodging directly with the lodging facility.

b. When attending a VA-sponsored program where the agency has negotiated with an airline service, and travelers are required to book directly with the airline.

c. When traveling to a remote location and it is not possible to book lodging or rental car accommodations through the travel system.

d. When circumstance will not allow booking of travel through the OBE (e.g., travel system is down or not available).

e. When making travel arrangements for personal/unofficial travel in conjunction with official travel. Reference [Appendix D, Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel Procedures](#)).

f. When travel is authorized under a Not-To-Exceed (NTE) travel authority.

g. When travel arrangements are provided in-kind by a non-Federal source. Reference [Appendix E, Non-Federal Sponsored Travel](#).

3. If none of the above circumstances apply, the traveler is responsible for any additional costs resulting from the failure to use the travel system, including service fees, cancellation penalties or other additional costs (e.g., higher airfares, rental car charges or hotel rates). In addition, the agency may take appropriate disciplinary action.

G. Temporary Duty Travel without Prior Authorization.

1. All employee travel requires advance approval, in accordance with [Section 010201A](#)
2. Approving officials may authorize reimbursement of an expense post-TDY travel based on the circumstances presented. Official travel performed without any prior travel authorization or requiring additional time to perform the travel specified in the original or amended authorization will be supported by a justification in the travel system explaining the reason why prior authorization (or an extension of time) was not obtained. Travelers will be responsible for expenses not sufficiently justified or denied by the approving official.
3. All employee travel time extensions post-travel require approval by the first line supervisor.
4. Requests for approval of unauthorized travel do not normally constitute approval to retroactively adjust a per diem or mileage rate prescribed by the FTR.

When amending the travel authorization, the per diem and mileage rates in effect during the travel episode will not be adjusted retroactively. The correction of obvious errors or adjustments resulting from mandatory FTR rate modifications is allowed.

#### H. Not-To-Exceed (NTE) Travel and No Cost Travel Authorization.

1. Under the Government Employee Training Act (GETA) authority, approving officials may authorize travel for all or part of the travel and/or training expenses for the period of training.
2. When the agency pays for part of the expenses, an employee may pay the remaining expense(s) with personal funds. Since NTE travel may co-mingle appropriated funds with personal funds, travel arrangements will not be made via the OBE or Individually Billed and Centrally Billed Travel Cards. Approving officials may authorize employees to attend training at no cost to VA. Reference [Appendix B, No Cost Travel Authority](#), for preparation.
3. An administrative determination will be made in accordance with Human Resources (HR) policy to determine whether an employee is in a duty or leave status. If the employee is in a duty status, an NTE Travel Authorization will be issued in the travel system. The travel authorization will specify the dollar amount of travel expenses to be reimbursed by VA. If the employee is in a leave or other non-duty status, a travel authorization will not be issued, and the traveler will not be entitled to reimbursement of any travel expenses. Reference [Appendix A, Purpose for Travel](#), to determine whether an activity is considered a training event.

#### I. Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel.

When VA employees combine personal/unofficial and official travel, properly prepared travel authorizations help the Department and travelers to determine when to charge for

annual leave, when to reimburse travel expenses, and who is financially responsible if a traveler becomes ill or is injured while away from the office. Reference [Appendix D, Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel Procedures](#), for instructions on how to create a travel authorization that combines personal/unofficial and official travel.

J. Local Travel ([Reference Vol XIV Ch. 7, Local Travel](#)).

K. Non-Federal Sponsored (Donated) Travel.

When a traveler has been approved to accept payment from a non-Federal Government entity (e.g., donated travel), a non-Federal Sponsored Travel Authorization will be created in VA's travel system when a traveler has obtained advance approval, in accordance with [Section 010201A](#). The travel authorization will identify the source of payment, payment type (e.g., in-kind or reimbursed by payment from the non-Federal source) and payment amount. [VA Form 0893, Advance Review of Offer to Donate Support for Official Travel](#), will be provided with the traveler's receipts, which are faxed into the travel system when submitting the travel claim. Reference [Appendix E, Non-Federal Sponsored Travel](#), for instructions on how to create a non-Federal Sponsored Travel Authority in the travel system.

#### 010202 PRE-EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW AND INVITATIONAL TRAVEL.

A. Pre-Employment Interview Travel.

1. A pre-employment interviewee is either a current Federal employee in a non-duty status, or a new hire. The FTR does not require reimbursement for pre-employment interviews ([41 C.F.R. § 301-75.2](#)). Therefore, when an individual performs pre-employment interview(s), the hiring official may use conference calls or video conferencing. Follow-up interview travel expenses may be paid when considered necessary by the hiring official, using fiscally prudent measures, only when advance approval is obtained, in accordance with [Section 010201A](#). Reimbursements for pre-employment interviews do not need to be all or nothing. The interviewing official may make the decision to partially reimburse the interviewee for travel to the pre-employment interview. An interviewee may be paid the same travel expenses to which a Government employee traveling on official business is entitled. Decisions to pay any or all travel expenses of an individual candidate will be in accordance with the authority, applicability and rules of [41 C.F.R. Chapter 301](#).

2. The approving official will determine eligibility based on OPM guidelines contained in [5 C.F.R. Part 572](#) and VA guidelines related to Title 38 employees, contained in VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 3, paragraph 5 and as may be provided in [38 U.S.C. § 7410](#).

3. Pre-employment interview travel will be approved on a trip-by-trip basis only. A travel authorization must be submitted in VA's travel system using the purpose code Invitational Travel. Interviewees are not authorized a travel advance. Interviewees will

be instructed on pertinent VA travel policy and procedures, for reservations, submitting a travel authorization for approval, and how to submit travel claims for reimbursement. Reference [Appendix F, Pre-Employment Interview Procedures](#), and note VA travel system profiles may only be moved temporarily for pre-employment interview for a maximum of 5 calendar days. The interviewee is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

4. Pre-employment travel expenses will not be approved for an interviewee to look for a residence at the prospective duty station.

5. Travel arrangements for the interviewee may be made by the interviewing facility's travel arranger in accordance with the FTR and VA policy (reference [Appendix F, Pre-Employment Interview Procedures](#)). Interviewees must use Government city-pair contracts with airlines and Amtrak and are bound by rules outlined in the FTR and VA policy. Common carrier transportation (air, rail, bus) will be paid through the station's CBA. For invitational travelers lodging and rental car reservations, the traveler will have to arrange their own lodging and rental car if they are authorized. Travelers will be notified of their reimbursement limitations based on the per diem entitlements for the TDY location.

6. The interviewee is accountable for all transportation tickets/e-tickets issued for use in performing pre-employment travel. The interviewing facility will provide the interviewee full instructions on procedures involved with ticket exchanges and/or credit procedures. Expenses other than common carrier transportation and/or lodging will be paid by the interviewee who will be reimbursed for allowable expenses upon submission and approval of a travel claim or local travel claim.

7. Interviewees whose travel has been approved will be advised to keep a record and maintain receipts of all charges until their reimbursement claim is settled. Interviewee claims against the Government are forfeited if the claimant attempts to defraud the Government. The claimant is subject to disciplinary and/or criminal provisions if a false, fictitious or fraudulent claim is presented against the United States ([41 C.F.R. § 301-52.12](#), [18 U.S.C. § 287](#) and [§ 1001](#)).

#### B. Invitational Travel.

1. Invitational travel involves VA paying for the travel of a non-Federal employee, a Federal employee traveling in a non-duty status or consultants (not under an agreement or contract with VA). Advance approval for invitational travel must be obtained, in accordance with [Section 010201A](#). Invitational travelers are not considered to have an "official permanent duty station" within the general meaning of that term. However, these individuals may be allowed travel and transportation expenses while traveling on official business for the Government away from their home or regular place of business and while at the place of employment or service for the Government. Such travel will be in accordance with the authority, applicability and rules of [41 C.F.R. Chapter 301](#) and

VA policy. Invitational travel does not apply to VA contractor employees when work is within the scope of the contract (reference [Appendix G, Travel Entitlements for Unique VA Employees](#), for additional travel guidance). Except as described herein, invitational travel orders will be processed through the travel system.

2. Invitations may be issued to individuals to confer with Department personnel, perform pre-employment interview, serve as attendants for disabled persons, or serve in other capacities when it is in the interest of the Government to pay travel expenses.
3. Officials approving invitational travel will ensure the traveler is aware that the travel arrangements will be made by VA at the time the invitational travel is extended. This is to prevent the traveler from purchasing transportation with personal funds.
  - a. For air reservations, the method of payment will be the CBA. Foreign visitors will be advised against making their own reservations, which may result in the unauthorized use of a Foreign Flag Air Carrier. The travel system will make every effort to secure the ticket on a U.S. Flag Air Carrier.
  - b. For lodging and rental car reservations, the traveler will have to arrange their own lodging and rental car if they are authorized. Travelers will be notified of their reimbursement limitations based on the per diem entitlements for the TDY location.
4. An invitational traveler must have a valid e-mail account and Social Security Number in order to process travel documents in the travel system. At this time, the travel system may only make payments in U.S. dollars and may only make EFT payments to U.S. bank accounts. If a traveler does not hold a U.S. bank account, a paper check in U.S. dollars will be sent to the mailing address provided. Only when the above requirements cannot be met, a manual process for invitational travel authorities ([VA Form 3036](#)) will be used.
5. Invitational travel authorizations cannot be issued to contractors who receive a fee for services rendered to VA. Travel authorizations cannot be issued to individuals who have received a grant and are using the grant.

#### 010203 BLANKET TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS.

A. Blanket authorizations will only be used for a named employee whose duties require travel of a repetitive nature. Blanket authorizations will not be used for conference travel, foreign travel, travel received from a non-Federal source (donated travel), permanent change-of-station travel, other-than-coach class travel, training-related travel or invitational travel (e.g., pre-employment interview travel, volunteer travel). Both unlimited and limited blanket authorizations will include an estimate of the travel costs to be incurred over the period covered by the authorization. Except for no-cost travel, blanket authorizations will be created using the travel system. Procedures for creating a blanket travel authority are available in VA's travel system online tutorial.

B. Unlimited blanket authorizations permit an employee to perform TDY travel without further authorization. Use of an unlimited blanket authorization is restricted to the Secretary and assistants; Deputy Secretary and assistants; Under Secretaries, their Deputies and Executive Assistants; and the VA Medical Inspector.

C. Limited blanket authorizations permit an employee to perform TDY travel without further authorization under certain specified conditions, which include realistic limitations on purposes, geographic areas, trip duration and costs. Any planned travel that exceeds the specific limitations will be separately authorized on a trip-by-trip authorization in the travel system. All limited blanket authorizations will be reviewed at the beginning of each fiscal year and, if it is determined that the authorization is still necessary, will be revalidated by the designated official.

D. When approved, a blanket travel authorization is used by authorized travelers to create trip-by-trip travel authorizations of 30 days or less, as long as each trip's duration falls within the dates set in the blanket travel authorization. These individual travel authorizations are automatically approved when submitted.

#### 010204 TRAVEL ADVANCES.

A. Employees who refuse to apply for the VA travel charge card, who are not covered by an exemption, have their card suspended or cancelled due to non-payment of their bills, or use the charge card for purposes other than those associated with official travel will not be authorized a travel advance. Reference [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#) for additional information.

B. Employees who are exempt from using the VA travel charge card (reference [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#) for employees who are exempt) may obtain travel advances by EFT. The traveler or travel arranger will contact the approving official to request an advance on the travel authorization through the travel system. Approving officials approve EFT advances when they electronically sign the travel authorization.

An employee cannot receive a travel advance by check or cash from the agent cashier (reference [Vol VIII, Ch. 3, Agent Cashier Accountability Policy](#)).

C. The approving official will limit EFT advances to a minimum amount and will approve them only when warranted. Generally, travel advances will be limited to the estimated cash needs of the trip or "out-of-pocket" expenses, which may include:

1. Lodging, meals and incidental expenses covered by the per diem allowance or actual subsistence allowance.
2. Miscellaneous transportation expenses (e.g., local transit system, taxi fares, parking fees).

3. Gasoline and other variable expenses associated with the use of an approved rental car. Variable expenses do not include pre-paid gas (estimated cost), Global Positioning System (GPS) or Toll Collection Transponder (estimated cost).
  4. Other approved miscellaneous expenses and those for which a reasonable estimate may be established before travel.
- D. Travel advances will not be issued for amounts less than \$50 or for one-day trips.
- E. Travel advances may only be received for up to a 30-day period at a time to cover allowable expenses.
- F. Travel advances will not be issued to non-Federal Government invitational travelers.
- G. Travel advances will not be issued for pre-employment interview travel.
- H. Travelers are responsible for the timely repayment (or liquidation) of travel advances. Reference [Appendix H, Procedures for Collecting an Outstanding Travel Advance](#).
- I. Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Cash Advances. Employees approved to travel and who are not exempt from the issuance of a travel card may obtain Automated Teller Machine (ATM) or bank counter advances to in accordance with [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#).

#### 010205 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

- A. Delegations of Authority. Authorizing officials are delegated the authority to approve travel authorizations and travel claims. Certain delegations of authority are required for reimbursement of actual expense.
1. When an employee requires actual expenses related to per diem above 150% and up to 300%, the lowest level delegation is the Assistant Secretary for Management/Chief Financial Officer (ASM/CFO) for VACO Staff Offices, the Under Secretaries for each Administration, and the Chairman, Board of Veterans' Appeals.
  2. When an employee requires actual expense related to per diem up to 150%, the lowest level delegation is the Chief Financial Officer within the organization or Administration.
  3. The ASM/CFO is the lowest level for a delegation of authority to waive the requirement for travel receipts for security reasons.
- B. Claiming Reimbursement.

1. Timely processing of a travel claim includes both the submission of a travel claim by the traveler and approval by the approving official.
2. Travelers must submit their travel claims with required receipts ([Appendix I, Receipt Requirements](#)), within five business days of the travel end date, or every 30 calendar days when on continuous or extended TDY travel.
3. Approving officials will review submitted travel claims and approve or return the claim to the traveler for clarification or justification, within three (3) business days.
4. Within 45-days from the travel end date FSC will determine if any outstanding travel obligations are still valid. Any invalid obligations will be deleted. This is to ensure that VA Travel Funds are used efficiently and effectively. One example of an invalid obligation would be travel that was planned but not taken.
5. During the 45-day window, the FSC will contact the traveler and approving officials of any outstanding obligations to determine if the obligation is valid. At a minimum contact will be at 15-day intervals after the travel end date.
6. If a travel claim is filed against an obligation that was previously found to be invalid the traveler's respective Deputy Undersecretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary or Other Key Official must approve the new obligation. Nothing in this policy prevents a traveler from filing a valid travel claim nor should it be interpreted in such a manner.
7. The employee will be reimbursed within 21 calendar days after submitting a properly prepared travel claim to the agency's designated approving official.
8. Travelers who knowingly defraud or attempt to defraud the Government will not only forfeit their rights to reimbursement (reference [41 C.F.R. § 301-52.12](#), [28 U.S.C. § 2514](#)) but may also be subject to criminal penalties, as authorized by [31 U.S.C. § 3729, False Claims](#). The traveler's claim for reimbursement will accurately reflect the facts involved in every instance so that the traveler avoids any violation of applicable regulations.

#### C. Alternate Submission of Travel Claims.

1. Only the traveler can submit and certify their travel claim as true and correct (reference [Section 010201](#) for specific guidance). However, FSC global system administrators may alternately submit a travel claim for the following travelers:
  - Invitational travelers;
  - An incapacitated or a deceased traveler; or
  - Secretary of VA, Deputy Secretary of VA, and Chief of Staff VA.
2. Reference [Appendix J, Procedures for Alternate Submission of a Travel Claim](#) for travel arranger guidance on requesting a travel claim to be alternately submitted.

D. Documentation and Review of Expenses Claimed.

1. The traveler or travel arranger is required to attach (fax or scan) all required receipts and supporting documentation into the electronic travel claim or local travel claim in the travel system before submitting them to the approving official. Reference [Appendix I, Receipt Requirements](#). The traveler or travel arranger will ensure that all receipts are attached to the electronic travel claim and that the receipts are legible. A copy of the ticketed itinerary for transportation will be included as a receipt with the travel claim, regardless of the payment method (CBA travel card, IBA travel card or employee's personal funds). Electronic documents are considered to be original documents. Travelers who fax receipts into the travel system are not required to maintain their paper receipts as the travel system will retain travel documents, receipts and other documentary evidence for 6 years.

2. When travel is approved on an actual expense basis (reference [Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem](#)), the employee will itemize each expense for which reimbursement is claimed on a daily basis. In addition, the employee will include the supporting documentation that approves the actual expense for lodging and/or meal(s). Meals will be itemized separately (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner). When an approving official limits reimbursement for M&IE to 100% of the applicable M&IE rate, the approving official may waive the requirement to provide receipts and/or itemization of M&IE.

3. Travel card holders will ensure that the total outstanding authorized charges made to their travel card are designated for split disbursement at the time of completion of the temporary duty travel claim (reference [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#)).

4. Adjustments may be made to a travel document until it is approved. The person making the adjustment is prompted to sign the adjustment. Reasons for making the change will be noted in the adjustment comment section or the remarks section. Once approved, the travel claim is complete, and no further action can be taken on the original travel claim. The traveler may submit supplemental travel claims for additional expenses incurred during a trip if the original travel claim has already been paid. The travel claim is not paid until the approving official reviews and approves the travel claim and required receipts.

5. Travel claims will be examined and approved by the approving official having knowledge of the facts involved in the travel. Final approval of a properly prepared travel claim will be completed to ensure payment within 21 calendar days from the date the claim was submitted. Approving officials will approve or return erroneous or incomplete travel claims to travelers within three business days after the traveler signs/submits the report (reference [Section 010205B](#)). If the travel claim is returned for correction, the timelines start over. Organizations may further restrict these timelines based on written procedures. Approving officials will abide by this time frame to prevent interest charges from accruing on the traveler's reimbursement and to ensure funds are

split timely to the travel card to avoid delinquencies ([5 C.F.R. Part 1315, Prompt Payment](#)). Approval signifies that the travel and expenses are in order and administratively approved for payment.

6. Procedures will be established by each authorizing official to ensure that reimbursement of expenses is properly administered and controlled to prevent abuse. An appropriate review of the justification for travel on an actual subsistence expense basis will be made. Expenses claimed by an employee will be reviewed by the authorizing official to determine whether the expenses are reasonable, allowable and necessarily incurred in connection with the travel assignment.

#### E. Post-Payment Travel Claim Audit.

The VA FSC will perform post-payment audits on a randomly-selected sample of electronically-routed travel claims and 100% of travel claims with monthly payments of \$7,500 and over. As part of the expense reviews, the Office of Business Oversight's Management Quality Assurance Service (MQAS) may perform judgmental reviews of travel claims for timeliness and appropriateness on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) facilities. Travelers or Approving Officials must be prepared to provide the necessary documentation for up to 6 years to support the travel reimbursement when travelers fail to electronically attach receipts with their travel claims. Travelers may submit amended travel claims for underpayments and may receive a Bill of Collection for any overpayment.

#### 010206 USE OF THE TRAVEL CHARGE CARD.

Employees are required to use the Government-sponsored, contractor-issued Travel Charge Card in accordance with the FTR and VA policy. Reference [Vol XVI, Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#), unless otherwise exempt.

#### **0103 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES**

010301 [5 U.S.C. § 4109, Expenses of Training](#)

010302 [5 U.S.C. § 5514, Installment Deduction for Indebtedness to the United States](#)

010303 [5 U.S.C. § 5705, Advancements and Deductions](#)

010304 [18 U.S.C. § 1030, Fraud and related activity in connection with computers](#)

010305 [31 U.S.C. Chapter 37, §§ 3711-3720\(E\), Collection and Compromise](#)

010306 [31 U.S.C. § 3729, False Claims](#)

010307 [38 U.S.C. § 7410, Additional Pay Authorities](#)

- 010308 [5 C.F.R. Part 550, Pay Administration](#)
- 010309 [5 C.F.R. Part 572, Travel and Transportation Expenses; New Appointees and Interviews](#)
- 010310 [5 C.F.R. Part 1315, Prompt Payment](#)
- 010311 [5 C.F.R. Part 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#)
- 010312 [31 C.F.R. Part 901, Standards for the Administrative Collection of Claims](#)
- 010313 [38 C.F.R. 1.914, Collection in Installments](#)
- 010314 [38 C.F.R. 1.980\(c\), Scope](#)
- 010315 [41 C.F.R. Chapters 301-304, Federal Travel Regulation](#)
- 010316 [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Improving the Management of Government Charge Card Programs](#)
- 010317 [FSC E-Gov Travel Service 2](#)
- 010318 [VA's Forms Web Site](#)
- 010319 [Office of Financial Policy](#)
- 010320 [U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Official Worksite for Location Based Pay Purposes](#)
- 010321 [OPM Pay Administration - Official Worksite](#)
- 010322 [Executive Order 13589, Promoting Efficient Spending \(November 9, 2011\)](#)
- 010323 [VA Directive 0000, Delegations of Authority, September 9, 2009](#)
- 010324 [VA Handbook 5007, Pay Administration, Part VIII, Chapter 15, Compensatory Time Off For Travel](#)

## 0104 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

010401 As required by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and 38 U.S.C. § 309, the Assistant Secretary for Management/Chief Financial Officer (CFO) oversees all financial management activities relating to the Department's programs and operations. Specific responsibilities include the direction, management and provision of policy guidance, and oversight of VA's financial management personnel, activities and operations. The CFO establishes financial policy, systems and operating procedures for all VA financial entities and provides guidance on all aspects of financial management.

010402 Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Chief Financial Officers, Finance Officers, Chief Accountants, Chiefs of Finance Activities and other key officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures set forth in this chapter.

010403 The Office of Finance, Office of Financial Policy (OFP) is responsible for developing, coordinating, reviewing, evaluating, and issuing VA financial policies, including those that impact financial systems and procedures for compliance with all financial laws and regulations. OFP is also responsible for working with the Office of Inspector General's independent contract auditors on VA's annual Consolidated Financial Statements audit and preparing and reviewing Consolidated Financial Statements, Notes and Required Supplementary Information.

010404 Supervisors are responsible for determining their subordinate employees' travel is essential for the purpose of carrying out VA's mission. If the supervisor is also the approving official on the travel authorization, then Section 010405 also applies.

010405 Approving officials will:

- A. Take and complete required travel training every three years.
- B. Approve travel for employees under their authority in advance of the travel.
- C. Determine if the travel is essential for the purpose of carrying out the mission of VA.
- D. Ensure all travel is approved and performed consistent with [41 C.F.R. Chapters 301 - 304](#), VA travel policy and any other Department-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices).
- E. Ensure adequate funds are available before approving travel.
- F. Ensure all travel is performed in the most economical and prudent manner.
- G. Ensure VA's travel system is used to prepare, process, approve, route TDY travel authorizations, and all TDY or local travel claims, including the requirement to use the travel system for making reservations, unless a policy exception applies.

H. Examine travel claims within three business day of submission (reference [Section 010205B](#)), to ensure the justification, supporting documentation, and receipts are attached; travel expenses for which reimbursement is claimed were performed as approved, and split disbursement was used to pay for all approved expenses charged to the IBA travel card.

I. Ensure travel outside of a traveler's regular duty hours is minimal.

J. Ensure travelers under their authority complete vendorizing forms for establishment in VA's travel system. The travel system is used to process travel payments electronically, file travel claims with electronically attached receipts, and comply with the travel card program guidelines.

K. Comply with the rule on segregation of duties. The approval official cannot approve documents that they have created/submitted in the role of an employee or as a travel arranger on behalf of an employee.

010406 Employee travelers will:

A. Be knowledgeable of the FTR, VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices).

B. Minimize costs of official travel by exercising the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays or luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business will not be reimbursed and are not acceptable under this standard. Employees will be responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience (e.g., higher air fares, additional unauthorized baggage, exchange fee on restricted airfares, airport parking in excess of lowest available or outside local office policy, or taxi when complimentary shuttle is available).

C. Ensure travel is approved by first line supervisor prior to departure.

D. Arrange travel using VA's travel system, including reservations for transportation, lodging and rental cars, unless an exception applies.

E. Cancel transportation and lodging reservations timely.

F. Where applicable, claim and obtain exemptions of tax imposed on hotel accommodations in locations listed in the Federal Acquisition Service's GSA Smart Pay State Tax Information ([GSA State Tax Information](#)). Only certificates issued by the locality granting the exemption may be used.

G. Return to VA any refund, credit or compensation payment obtained where the carrier fails to provide confirmed airplane accommodations (e.g., denies confirmed reserved seat).

H. Submit claim for reimbursement for expenses into the travel system within five business days of return to the official station. Travelers in an extended travel status will submit travel claims every 30 calendar days. All TDY travel claims must be processed in accordance with [Section 010205B](#). Local travel claims may be submitted monthly.

I. Account for travel advances when filing the travel claim. In the event travel was cancelled or the advance exceeded the authorized expenses, payment will be received from the employee by check or cash at that time.

J. Be aware of ethical guidelines on the acceptance of unsolicited gifts when various vendors provide free gifts or give-away items at training conferences. Reference [5 C.F.R. Part 2635](#) for further explanation.

K. Comply with VA's travel charge card program guidance in [Vol XVI Ch. 2](#).

L. Take required travel training every three years.

010407 Global system administrators may alternately submit a travel claim in accordance with [Section 010502](#).

010408 Travel arrangers will:

A. Be knowledgeable of the FTR, VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices, newsflashes).

B. Assist employees by creating and/or submitting travel authorizations on their behalf.

C. Assist employees by creating travel claims on their behalf. The travel arranger cannot submit the travel claim in the travel system on behalf of the employee.

D. A travel arranger cannot approve a document which they have prepared and/or submitted, as it violates segregation of duties.

E. A VA contract employee may be established in the travel system as a travel arranger with limited capabilities. The contractor cannot submit or approve any document, as a contract employee cannot be an accountable official.

## 0105 PROCEDURES

This section provides detailed procedures in the related appendices. The chapter refers back to the corresponding policy paragraphs.

### 010501 TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION AND APPROVAL.

#### A. Authorization and Approval.

- [Appendix A: Purpose for Travel.](#)
- [Appendix G: Travel Entitlements for Unique VA Employees.](#)

#### B. Travel System.

- [Appendix C: Procedures to Reimburse Travel Expenses via EFT.](#)

#### C. No Cost Travel Authority.

- [Appendix B: No Cost Travel Authority.](#)

#### D. Non-Federal Sponsored Travel.

- [Appendix E: Non-Federal Sponsored Travel.](#)

#### E. Local Travel. Reference [Vol XIV Ch. 7, Local Travel.](#)

#### F. Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel.

- [Appendix D: Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel.](#)

#### G. Pre-employment Interview Travel.

- [Appendix F: Pre-employment Interview Procedures.](#)

### 010502 TRAVEL ADVANCES.

- [Appendix H: Procedures for Collecting an Outstanding Travel Advance.](#) For procedures other than collecting travel advances, reference [Section 010204.](#)

### 010503 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

- [Appendix I: Receipt Requirements.](#) For procedures relating to the documentation and review of expenses claimed, reference [Section 010205B.](#)

### 010504 USE OF THE TRAVEL CHARGE CARD.

- [Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program.](#)

010505 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

- [Appendix J: Procedures for Alternate Submission of a Travel Claim](#) –travel arranger procedures for requesting alternate submission of travel claims.

## 0106 DEFINITIONS

010601 Approving Official (AO). An employee with authority to approve or direct travel for official Government business by the agency head.

010602 Audit. A formal examination of an organization or individual's accounts or financial situation.

010603 Authorization (see "Travel Authorization").

010604 Automated Teller Machine (ATM). An electronic device which allows cash advances from participating banks.

010605 Automated Teller Machine Cash Advance. Monies obtained from a Travel Card via ATM or bank teller. Cash advances will be obtained in limited amounts commensurate with official travel.

010606 Bill of Collection. A written "validation notice" telling an employee how much money he or she owes the Government. This notice will also include the name of the creditor to whom the employee owes the money and how to proceed if the employee wishes to dispute the bill.

010607 Common Carrier Itinerary/Receipt. A valid receipt will show the transportation provider's name, class of service, the date(s) of service, the total cost of service plus taxes and fees, the date, amount and method of payment. This may be an "Itinerary/receipt" or "receipt" provided by email or via a website using the traveler's name and booking number that shows that the transportation has been ticketed, lists the transportation company, the itemized costs, the total amount paid and the method of payment. If the traveler was not provided a receipt, the traveler may request one from the ticket counter or kiosk when checking in at the transportation terminal. An itinerary/invoice showing that air or rail transportation has been booked is **not** a valid receipt because it only includes anticipated costs and does not substantiate an actual payment. A travel card statement is **not** a valid receipt because it does not show the class of service or date of service provided.

010608 Conference. A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term "conference" also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404.

010609 Delegation of Authority. Delegation of Authority grants authority for a specific function to a subordinate. The authority must be well-defined. The top-level management has greatest authority. The delegation does NOT relieve the granting authority of the accountability for the end result. The delegation of authority letter must be signed, on file, and current with the position the authority has been delegated.

010610 Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The transfer of funds, other than a transaction originated by cash, check or similar paper instrument that is initiated through an electronic terminal, telephone, computer or magnetic tape, for the purpose of ordering, instructing or authorizing a financial institution to debit or credit an account. The term includes, but is not limited to, Automated Clearing House and Fedwire transfers.

010611 Employee. An appointed officer or employee of an agency, including a special Government employee. This definition also includes an individual employed intermittently in the Government service as an expert or consultant and paid on a daily when-actually-employed (WAE) basis and an individual serving without pay or at \$1 a year (also referred to as “invitational traveler”).

010612 Federal Travel Regulation (FTR). The FTR enumerates the travel and location policy for all Title 5 Executive Agency employees. The Code of Federal Regulations is available at [41 C.F.R. Subtitle F - Chapters 300-304](#).

010613 Government-contract Rental Automobile. An automobile obtained for short-term use from a commercial firm, as specified in the Federal Travel Directory, under the provisions of an appropriate General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Supply Schedule contract.

010614 Government-furnished Automobile. An automobile owned by VA, assigned or dispatched to VA on a rental basis from a GSA Interagency Fleet Management Center, or leased by VA for a period of 30 days or longer from a commercial firm.

010615 Valid Hotel Receipt. A valid hotel receipt will show the traveler’s name, lodging facility name, specific dates of lodging, the unit price, any additional charges (e.g., hotel taxes, city taxes) and total amount billed to the room. A “zero balance” is required. Travelers may get an invoice when they check out of the lodging facility, have it sent to them, or obtain online.

010616 Invitational Travel. Authorized travel of individuals either not employed or employed intermittently (under 5 U.S.C. § 5703) in the Government service as consultants or experts and paid on a daily when-actually-employed basis, and individuals serving without pay or at \$1 a year when they are acting in a capacity directly related to or in connection with official activities of the Government. Travel allowances authorized for such persons are the same as those normally authorized for employees in connection with temporary duty.

010617 Local Travel. Travel performed within an established local radius of the official duty station. The standard local radius will be 50 miles from the official station and employee's or virtual employee's residence. A VA station may establish a local radius specific to their station based on counties or nearby cities (geographic boundaries). This local radius will be established in writing and approved by the facility director. For virtual employees, the local radius will be 50 miles from the permanent worksite (residence or alternate worksite).

010618 Miscellaneous Expenses. Other miscellaneous travel expenses are those expenses described in [41 C.F.R Part 301-12](#), which are directly attributable and necessary to the travel and temporary duty as authorized and performed. When authorized or approved, these expenses are reimbursable in addition to the per diem allowance and transportation expenses.

010619 Official Station. Per the FTR, an area defined by the agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business ([41 C.F.R. § 301-1.2](#)). The area may be a mileage radius around a particular point, a geographic boundary, or any other definite domain, provided no part of the area is more than 50 miles from where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or from an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. If the employee's work involves recurring travel or varies on a recurring basis, the location where the work activities of the employee's position of record are based is considered the regular place of work.

010620 Official Travel. Travel under an official travel authorization from an employee's official station or other authorized point of departure to a temporary duty location and return from a temporary duty location, between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency.

010621 Online Booking Engine (OBE). An Internet-based system that permits travelers to make their own reservations for transportation (e.g., air, rail and car rental) and lodging while using the travel system.

010622 Not-to-Exceed (NTE) Travel. Travel which is limited to a specific dollar amount and must adhere to the requirements of the Government Employees Training Act.

010623 Payment. Funds paid for travel, subsistence and related expenses by check or similar instrument or payment in-kind.

010624 Per Diem. A per diem allowance (also referred to as a subsistence allowance) is a daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for lodging, meals and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation expenses and other miscellaneous expenses.

010625 Valid Receipt. A valid receipt is a written acknowledgement that indicates the amount paid for goods or services. It will show the name of the traveler, the date of the

transaction and the company providing the goods or services. A credit card statement is not a receipt.

010626 Valid Rental Car Receipt. A valid rental car receipt will show the rental car agency name, specific dates of service, itemized unit costs, any additional charges (e.g., airport concession fees, taxes) and total amount actually paid. The receipt is provided by the rental car company when the traveler returns the rental car or may be sent to the traveler when using an express return. A contract for rental car services signed when renting a car is **not** a valid receipt because it only shows estimated charges and does not show the amount actually paid.

010627 Remote or Isolated Location. A geographic area that is inaccessible or difficult to travel due to limited infrastructure (roads, navigable waterways, telecommunications, etc.) or temporary conditions due to acts of nature. The area may also include locations that are more than 100 miles from the nearest population center having year-round access.

010628 Residence. A dwelling from which the employee commutes daily to the permanent work site (official station or virtual work site). For example, an employee works at VA Central Office, rents an apartment in Washington DC, and commutes to and from the apartment to VACO for work. The employee also owns a home in Atlanta, Georgia. The residence for travel entitlements would be the apartment in Washington, D.C. The home in Atlanta, Georgia would be considered a second residence.

010629 Segregation of Duties. Key duties and responsibilities divided or segregated among different people to reduce the risk of error or fraud. This will include separating the responsibilities for authorizing transactions, processing and recording them, reviewing the transactions, and handling any related assets. One individual may not control more than one key aspect of a transaction or event.

010630 Serious Illness or Injury. A grave, critical or potentially life-threatening illness or injury; a sudden injury such as an automobile accident where the exact extent of injury may be undetermined but is thought to be critical or potentially life-threatening based on the best assessment available; or other situations involving less serious illness or injury of a family member in which the absence of the employee would result in great personal hardship for the immediate family.

010631 Service Charge. An amount of money levied for the use of a service. Charge may also be called a transaction fee, exchange fee or service fee.

010632 Split Disbursement. A payment process allowing payments to be made to the Travel Card Contractor by the agency on behalf of the cardholder. At the cardholder's direction and in accordance with agency policy, disbursement is split. The bank receives a direct payment by the agency of the cardholder specified/claimed amount. The rest of the payment is disbursed to a cardholder account or directly to the

cardholder. Split disbursement is an effective tool to reduce delinquency and improve refunds paid to the agency.

010633 Transportation Expenses. Expenses include commercial bus, air, rail or ship fares and are reimbursable in addition to the per diem allowance. Transportation expenses also include local transit system and taxi fares, cost of commercial rental cars and other special conveyances, and mileage and other allowances to cover operating expenses for use of privately-owned conveyances, including fees for parking, ferries, etc.

010634 Travel Advance. Pre-payment of estimated travel expenses paid to an employee in the form of electronic funds transfer. An employee cannot receive a check or cash from an agent cashier for official travel expenses.

010635 Travel Arranger. An individual with the authority to prepare travel documents for other employees or individuals.

010636 Travel Authorization. Written permission to travel on official business and may be Unlimited open, Limited open or Trip-by-trip.

010637 Travel Card (Government Travel Charge Card). A convenient method for Federal agencies and their employees to make payments for official Government travel and travel-related expenses. There are two types of accounts available under the GSA SmartPay contract – an individually billed account (IBA) and a centrally billed account (CBA).

010638 Travel Claim. A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official travel, including permanent change of station (PCS) travel.

010639 Travel System. The Government-contracted, end-to-end travel management service that automates and consolidates the Federal travel process in a self-service Web-centric environment, covering all aspects of official travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement and travel management reporting.

010640 Traveler. An individual, as defined by the FTR, who is authorized to perform official Government travel.

010641 Temporary Duty (TDY) Location. A place outside the official duty station's local travel radius and employee's residence, where the employee is authorized to travel.

010642 Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel. Travel by an employee on official business, as authorized by the employee's approving official through a travel authorization.

**0107 RESCISSIONS**

010701 VA Financial Policies and Procedures, Vol XIV Ch. 1, Travel Administration, September 2018.

**0108 QUESTIONS**

Questions concerning these financial policies and procedures should be directed to:

VHA	<a href="mailto:VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov">VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov</a>
VBA	<a href="mailto:TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov">TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov</a>
NCA	<a href="mailto:NCABudgetService@va.gov">NCABudgetService@va.gov</a>
OIT	<a href="mailto:VACOITTravel@va.gov">VACOITTravel@va.gov</a>
All Others	<a href="mailto:VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov">VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov</a>

**0109 REVISIONS**

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010201	Paragraph A, 1. Replaced submitted with prepared with regard to travel arranger. Added paragraph D., 1., Travel System clarifying access to VA's travel system using credentials other than your own is not authorized, referencing 18 U.S.C. § 1030. Updated paragraph 4 with a reference to <a href="#">Section 010205</a> , paragraph B. for guidance on alternate submission for invitational travelers.	OFP (047G)	February 2020
010205	Removed previous travel arranger alternate submission policy under paragraph B., 7. Added new policy under paragraph C for alternate submission of travel claims for incapacitated, deceased, and specific VA positions by FSC global system administrators.	OFP (047G)	February 2020
010304	Added 18 U.S.C. § 1030, Fraud and related activity in connection with computers.	OFP (047G)	February 2020
010407	Added global system administrator role and responsibility for alternate submission of travel claims.	OFP (047G)	February 2020

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010408	Paragraph C., removed alternate submission of travel claims in limited situations.	OFP (047G)	February 2020
0105	Added 010205 Appendix J as a procedure.	OFP (047G)	February 2020
0107	Rescinded September 2018 published chapter.	OFP (047G)	February 2020
Appendix J	Added procedures for alternate submission of a travel claim.	OFP (047G)	February 2020
Various	Removed all reference to Appendix A, VA Secretary Memorandum, on essential employee travel guidance throughout the chapter policy and in Appendix F, replacing with previous February 20, 2017 travel authorization approval policy, with link to <a href="#">Section 010201A</a> for current guidance.	APS (047)	September 2018
010201	Revised paragraph A to February 20, 2017 policy requiring supervisory approval of employee travel and added an approving official holding a higher-level position in an employee's direct line organizational structure may approve travel.	APS (047)	September 2018
010404	Added Supervisor's role and responsibility to ensure employee travel is mission essential.	APS (047)	September 2018
010501	Updated Appendix Letters with the removal of Appendix A, VA Secretary Memo.	APS (047)	September 2018
0107	Rescinded Vol XIV Ch. 1, Travel Administration dated June 2018.	APS (047)	September 2018
Appendix A	Removed the June 29, 2017 VA Secretary Memorandum, "Employee Essential Travel". Updated all appendix letters for remaining appendices and links throughout the chapter.	APS (047)	September 2018

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010205	Added in Section 010205B: Invalid travel obligations not processed by traveler and approving official within the 45-day timeline will be cancelled by the FSC; FSC notification to traveler and approving official required 15 and 30-days on obligations pending cancellation and when cancelled; and processing of travel claims after the 45-day time-line will require the approval of the traveler's respective Deputy Undersecretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary or Other Key Official. Added references to this section in other sections.	APS (047)	June 2018
Various	Changed expense report, expense voucher, travel voucher to travel claim, and local travel voucher, local voucher to local travel claim. Changed alternate preparer to travel arranger.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
0101 Overview	Modified FTR supersedes Union agreement statement.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
0102 Policy	Modified various policy sections to align with Appendix A, VA Secretary Memorandum.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
010201 Travel Approval, Training and Authorization	Fixed hyperlink for conference approval in Para. A, and FSC training in Para. B.; Removed manual exception for local travel claims replacing with must be entered in VA's travel system in Para. D.1.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
010202 Pre-Employment Interview an Invitational Travel	Revised Pre-Employment Interview and Invitational Travel policy sections to reflect pre-employment interview travel must be processed in VA's travel system as an invitational traveler.	OFP (047G)	August 2017

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010204 Travel Advances	FTR Amendment 2016-01 changes prompted removal of mandatory use exemption examples under Para. B, replacing it with link reference to Vol XVI Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program for guidance on exemptions. Under Para I, modified ATM policy with link to also reference Vol XVI Ch. 2.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
0104 Roles and Responsibilities	Modified Approving Official, Employee, and Alternate Preparer sections to reference Appendix A, VA Secretary Memorandum requirements.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
0105 Procedures	Added Appendix A, VA Secretary Memorandum.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
Appendices	Added Appendix A, VA Secretary Memorandum (June 29, 2017), Essential Employee Travel, and re-lettered remaining appendices.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
Appendix G	Removed manual VA Form 5575 procedure for pre-employment interview due to 1358 obligation Momentum change, replacing with procedures for using VA's travel system as invitational traveler.	OFP (047G)	August 2017
Appendix I	Removed B1 – receipt requirements for baggage.	OFP (047G)	February 2017
Overall	Removed FedTraveler and replaced with VA travel system.	OFP (047G)	February 2017
Overall	Updated NARA document retention requirements from 6 years and 3 months to 6 years.	OFP (047G)	February 2017
010201A Travel Approval, Training and Authorization	A.1. Added verbiage on Delegation of Authority. Included NOTE regarding blanket approval.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201A Travel Approval, Training and Authorization	A.4. Added TSO website	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201B. Training	Added Training section; outlines training requirements for employees, supervisors and approving officials.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010201C. Authorization	C.6. Reworded note that compensation for travel outside of employee's regular duty hours will be in accordance with HR policy.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201D. Travel System	D.1. Added reference to Appendix C. and verbiage to mandate traveler must retain TA's that are not in the travel system	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201E. Use of the Travel System	E.2. Language added referring to VA Policy requiring CBA cards be used for employee transportation and fees.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201F. Exceptions for the use of the Travel System or Online Booking Engine (OBE).	F.2. Inserted requirement to enter note in travel authorization explaining extenuating circumstances. F.2.e. Inserted link to Appendix D. F.2.g. Inserted link to Appendix E.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201H. Not-To-Exceed (NTE) Travel and No Cost Travel Authorization.	H.2. Added reference to Appendix B. H.3 Added reference to Appendix A.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201I. Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel	Added reference to Appendix D.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201J. Local Travel	Removed paragraphs discussing local travel policy and replaced with reference to Local Travel policy chapter (Chapter 7).	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201K. Non-Federal Sponsored (Donated) Travel	Added reference to Appendix E.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010202A. Pre-Employment Interview Travel.	A.3. Added reference to Appendix F.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010204. Travel Advances.	A. Added reference to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, <i>Travel Charge Card</i> . H. Added reference to Appendix H.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010205B. Claiming Reimbursement	B.1. Added note on travel system limitation regarding travel authorizations B.3. Inserted reference to Volume XIV, Chapter 5, <i>Travel under Special Circumstances</i> .	APPS (047GA)	May 2013

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010205C. Documentation and Review of Expenses Claimed.	C.1 Inserted language requiring a copy of the ticketed itinerary with the expense voucher.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010404 Approving officials will	A. Inserted training requirement.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010405 Employee Travelers will	L. Inserted training requirement.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010501 Travel Authorization and Approval	A. Added links to Appendix A/G; B. Added link to Appendix C; C. Added link Appendix B; D. Added link to Appendix E; F. Added link to Appendix D; G. Added link to Appendix F.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010502 Travel Advances.	Added link to Appendix H.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010503 Travel Reimbursement Policies and Procedures.	Added link to Appendix I.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010504 Use of The Travel Charge Card	Added link to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, <i>Travel Charge Card</i> .	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix B	Inserted example for clarity.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix D	Added language requesting brochure be attached to travel authorization.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix F	Added additional verbiage for clarity.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix G	Added additional verbiage for clarity.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013

**APPENDIX A: PURPOSE FOR TRAVEL**

All travel authorizations will specify the purpose of the travel requested. The travel purpose on the authorization will specify one of the following five “general purpose” categories. Associated travel system purpose code is also listed.

Purpose for Travel	Associated Travel System Purpose Code	Use When
<b>Employee Emergency</b>	Emergency Travel	Travel related to an unexpected occurrence/event or injury/illness that affects the employee personally and/or directly that requires immediate action/attention. Examples: Traveler is incapacitated by illness or injury, death or serious illness of a family member or catastrophic occurrence or impending disaster that directly affects the employee's home. Emergency travel also includes travel for medical care while employee is TDY away from official duty station, death of employee/immediate family member when performing official duties away from the official duty station or home of record, medical attendant transportation, assistance travel for an employee with special needs, and travel for an employee who has been threatened and needs protection.
<b>Mission (Operational)</b>	Patient Care Site Visit Information Meeting Invitational Travel Speech/Presentation Detail May Need SF52	Travel to a particular site in order to perform operational or managerial activities. Travel to attend a meeting to discuss general agency operations, review status reports or discuss topics of general interest. Examples: Employee's day-to-day operational or managerial activities, as defined by the agency, to include, but not be limited to: hearings, site visit, information meeting, inspections, audits, investigations and examinations.

Purpose for Travel	Associated Travel System Purpose Code	Use When
<b>Special Agency Mission</b>	Special Mission	Travel to carry out a special agency mission and/or perform a task outside of the agency's normal course of day-to-day business activities that is unique or distinctive. These special missions are defined by the head of agency and normally not programmed in the agency annual funding authorization. Examples: agency-defined special mission details, security missions and agency emergency response/recovery such as civil, natural disasters, evacuation, catastrophic events, technical assistance, evaluations or assessments.
<b>Conference--Other Than Training</b>	Conference	Performed in connection with training. Consultation or exchange of information or discussion. Agencies have to distinguish between conference and training attendance and use the appropriate identifier (see Training below). Examples: To participate in a planned program as a speaker/panelist or other form of presentation, host, planner or others designated to oversee the conference or attendance with no formal role or as an exhibitor.
<b>Training</b>	Training	Travel in conjunction with educational activities to become proficient or qualified in one or more areas of responsibility. Title 5 U.S.C. § 4101(4) states that the term 'training' means "the process of providing for and making available to an employee and placing or enrolling the employee in a planned, prepared and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical, mechanical, trade, clerical, fiscal, administrative or other fields which will improve individual and organizational performance and assist in achieving the agency's mission and performance

Purpose for Travel	Associated Travel System Purpose Code	Use When
		<p>goals." The term `conference' may also apply to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 C.F.R. 410.404, which states that ``agencies may sponsor an employee's attendance at a conference as a developmental assignment under section 4110 of Title 5, United States Code, when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The announced purpose of the conference is educational or instructional;</li> <li>(b) More than half of the time is scheduled for a planned organized exchange of information between presenters and audience which meets the definition of training in section 4101 of Title 5, United States Code;</li> <li>(c) The content of the conference is germane to improving individual and/or organizational performance and</li> <li>(d) Development benefits will be derived through the employee's attendance.</li> </ul> <p>Agencies have to distinguish between conference and training attendance and use the appropriate identifier (see Conference--Other Than Training above). Examples: Job required training, Internships, Inter Governmental Personnel Act and forums.</p>

## APPENDIX B: NO COST TRAVEL AUTHORITY

**Use of VA Form 3036 for No-Cost TDY Travel.** VA Form 3036, *Travel Authority for Temporary Duty Travel*, will be used to authorize no-cost temporary duty travel (TDY). Each [VA Form 3036](#) will identify the purpose, itinerary and estimated cost of the trip (e.g., \$0.00).

VA Form 3036 will be used when more than one person will travel on a single round trip to the same destination for the same purpose, within the same period and on the same itinerary at no cost to the VA. The names of all travelers, their addresses and titles will be attached to the completed VA Form 3036. Each traveler will be furnished a copy of VA Form 3036 and attachment.

VA Form 3036 will be immediately void for any episode of travel when it is known that the named employee(s) will not travel or will incur expense under it. A new travel authority will be created in VA's travel system for that episode of travel if unforeseen circumstances cause the traveler(s) to perform round trip travel lasting more than 12 hours or incur a travel or per diem expense.

VA Form 3036 may be authorized on a yearly basis (e.g., blanket) by entering appropriate remarks on the form. Example: This travel authority is valid during fiscal year 20XX.

Local management will establish the necessary controls and records retention required for employee no-cost travel authorizations prepared and issued.

See [Example 1B-1, Sample No Cost Travel Authority](#).

Example 1B-1: Sample No-Cost Travel Authority

 Department of Veterans Affairs			
<b>TRAVEL AUTHORITY FOR TEMPORARY DUTY</b>		1A. NAME AND LOCATION OF STATION VA Medical Center, Anywhere, USA	1B. STATION NO. 777
2. NAME AND TITLE OF TRAVELER VA Traveler, Director		3. RESIDENCE ADDRESS (Number and street, city, State, and ZIP Code) 123 Main Street Anywhere, USA 12345	
You are authorized to perform travel as indicated below and to be reimbursed for necessary expenses of travel as provided in Federal Travel Regulations, as amended, and in VA Travel directives. Please see copy five for ticket refund procedures.			
<b>POINTS OF TRAVEL (List official temporary duty sites only)</b>			
4A. FROM Anywhere, USA	4B. TO Somewhere, USA AND RETURN TO Anywhere, USA		
5. PURPOSE OF TRAVEL Mission (Operational)			
6. TRAVEL TO BEGIN ON OR ABOUT 10/01/2010	7. NO. OF DAYS 1	8. MODE OF TRAVEL <input type="checkbox"/> RAIL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR (Lowest cost available) <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT OWNED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify)	
<b>(X) BASIC FOR REIMBURSEMENT</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> 9A. YOU ARE ALLOWED THE FOLLOWING PER DIEM RATE IN LIEU OF SUBSISTENCE		PER DIEM RATE \$	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9B. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL ON AN ACTUAL SUBSISTENCE EXPENSE BASIS AND BE REIMBURSED IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED THE FOLLOWING AMOUNT PER DAY		AMOUNT PER DAY \$	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9C. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE (administratively determined to be most advantageous to the Government) AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE		MILEAGE RATE CENTS	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9D. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE (administratively determined that common carrier transportation is the preferred method of travel but employee wishes to use privately owned conveyance as a matter of personal preference) AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE (total allowable amount is limited to total constructive cost of common carrier transportation including constructive per diem by that mode of transportation).		MILEAGE RATE CENTS	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9E. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY GOVERNMENT - OWNED AUTOMOBILE			
<input type="checkbox"/> 9F. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE (Government-owned automobile would be more advantageous to the Government but employee requests and is authorized to use a privately owned conveyance) AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE		MILEAGE RATE CENTS	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9G. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE (Government-owned automobile is available and employee who would not ordinarily be authorized the use of a privately owned conveyance nevertheless requests and is authorized the use of a privately owned conveyance) AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE		MILEAGE RATE CENTS	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9H. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED THE FOLLOWING EXCESS BAGGAGE WHICH WILL		WEIGHT AUTHORIZED LBS.	
<input type="checkbox"/> BE OBTAINED ON SF 1189, U.S. GOVT TRANSPORTATION REQUEST		<input type="checkbox"/> BE PAID FOR BY YOU IN CASH, WITH REIMBURSEMENT TO BE OBTAINED ON YOUR SF 1012, TRAVEL VOUCHER	
NO. PIECES AUTHORIZED			
10. REMARKS (Continue on reverse) No-cost Travel. Should your official duties require more than 12 hours of travel time, or should you incur necessary travel or per diem expenses, this travel authority shall be void for that episode of travel. This travel authority is valid during fiscal year 2011.			
I certify that the travel herein was reviewed and determined to be essential to the accomplishment of VA programs and missions.			
11. SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL			DATE
13. TRAVEL AUTHORITY NO.	14. TRANSPORTATION REQUEST NO.(S)		17A. FUND CERTIFICATION: The services listed on this request are properly chargeable to the following allotments, the available balances of which are sufficient to cover the cost thereof, and funds have been obligated.
15. ESTIMATED COST, LIMITATION .001 (Show round figures)			17B. APPROPRIATION AND ACCOUNTING SYMBOLS N/A
15A. GSA CAR RENTAL \$ 0.00	15B. ALL OTHER MISCELLANEOUS \$ 0.00	15C. TOTAL \$ 0.00	
16. ESTIMATED COST, LIMITATION .007 (Show round figures)			17C. OBLIGATED BY
16A. TRAVEL TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OR MEETING \$ 0.00	16B. ALL OTHER EMPLOYEE ADMINISTRATIVE TRAVEL \$ 0.00	16C. TOTAL \$ 0.00	
			17D. DATE

## APPENDIX C: PROCEDURES TO REIMBURSE TRAVEL EXPENSES VIA EFT

### A. Overview

The Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-134) mandates Federal payments to recipients by EFT. The only exception is written certification that the recipient does not have an account with a financial institution or an authorized payment agent.

These procedures apply to all VA employees requesting reimbursement(s) relating to Temporary Duty (TDY) travel and to Permanent Change of Station (PCS) travel.

### B. TDY Procedures

1. The traveler's local travel system administrator will provide guidance and assistance to travelers in completing the proper form to establish EFT travel reimbursement. A traveler normally designates the same bank or financial institution for EFT travel reimbursement that he or she has already designated for payroll Direct Deposit (DD)/EFT.

2. The local VA travel system administrator will forward the appropriate forms to the Financial Services Center (FSC), which will provide the traveler with a personal vendor code. VA's Financial Management System (FMS) uses a vendor code to identify each traveler in the system. When FMS processes a travel document for reimbursement, FMS uses the vendor code to provide the Department of the Treasury with the instructions on where to send the payment. The vendor code references information about the bank or financial institution, which had been designated by the traveler on the EFT travel reimbursement form.

3. For TDY travel, the local travel system administrator will enter the traveler's vendor code into VA's travel system for the traveler as part of their user profile. The traveler's vendor code will be established prior to creating any travel documents in the system.

4. If a traveler changes the bank or financial institution designated for EFT travel reimbursement, the traveler will notify the FSC Vendorizing Team and complete the appropriate form.

### C. VA Form 10091

To designate the financial institution for EFT reimbursement, the traveler will complete [VA Form 10091, VA-FSC Vendor File Request Form](#).

## **APPENDIX D: PROCEDURES FOR COMBINING PERSONAL/UNOFFICIAL TRAVEL WITH OFFICIAL TRAVEL**

### **A. Creating a Travel Authorization**

1. Create a travel authorization to include inclusive dates of both official and personal travel.
2. Only include the TDY location(s) when building the itinerary. A personal trip is not a TDY location. For example, if you are traveling from Washington, DC to Denver and stopping in Chicago for 2 days of personal travel after completing your TDY, you would only show Denver as the TDY location and explain on the authorization that you stopped in Chicago for 2 days on personal travel.
3. Indicate leave/personal travel days as appropriate within the per diem entitlements section by “excluding” those days from per diem.
4. Select flights for the official route using VA’s online booking engine. Travel system will automatically include this cost for the official travel portion.
5. Select flights from the “Travel Research” module for the personal travel portion of your trip and make a screen print to attach to your authorization in the receipts section. Then, enter the amount of the personal flights/fare in the Other Transportation section under Travel in your authorization. Note: The cost of the personal route is limited to the direct one-way YCA fare. If there are no contract (YCA) fares available, the lowest Government unrestricted fare will be used.
6. Make other travel arrangements using commercial means as desired for personal travel only. Save the invoice and attach it into your travel claim later. The receipt is required as reimbursement is limited to YCA fare or actual cost, whichever is the lower cost.
7. Book rental car and hotels for official travel dates only. Make sure you change the dates accordingly on the search criteria before searching for rental cars and hotels.
8. Complete the travel authorization by adding your expenses, accounting code, etc. Enter a comment to the approving official stating your leave dates and destination. Save and proceed to the digital signature page and sign to book the reservations.
9. When attending conferences or training, attach a brochure which reflects the conference or training dates. The approving official should compare these dates to the authorized TDY dates to ensure travelers are not claiming reimbursement for official TDY combined with personal travel dates. If reimbursement is claimed for departure dates greater than one day prior and one day post TDY, approval will be documented.

**B. Creating a Travel Claim**

1. Create a travel claim from the travel authorization.
2. Use a Travel Cost Comparison Worksheet to compare official travel to official/personal travel. You may need to edit some expenses to this worksheet. Do not make changes on the authorization. At the bottom of the worksheet, your reimbursable amount is determined and will match the amount on the travel claim. This worksheet will be reviewed as the cost comparison by your approving official.
3. Edit the travel claim to enter actual expenses incurred up to the reimbursable amount from the worksheet.
4. Print the itinerary received from the Travel Management Center with official travel reservations and attach it as a receipt. Do the same with your personal travel reservations.
5. Fax into the receipts section all other required receipts and supporting documentation (e.g., Authorization for Business Class travel, Advance Review of Payments from a Non-Federal Source).
6. Sign/submit the travel claim to begin the routing process.

## APPENDIX E: NON-FEDERAL-SPONSORED TRAVEL

**Procedures:** Employees who are authorized to accept payments from a non-Federal source will be in an official duty status, as opposed to leave or excused or authorized absence and will create a Non-Federal source travel authorization to perform such travel.

Following are the steps to create a travel authorization in the travel system when a Non-Federal source provides payment for travel expenses:

1. On the **My Travel Desktop** page, select the **Non-Fed Sponsored Travel** menu option.
2. On the **Travel Authorization** page, enter your travel destinations and make your reservations.
3. Select the **Complete Authorization** button to go to the **Financial Summary** page.
4. On the **Financial Summary** page, click the **plus sign (+)** to expand the **Summary of Expense Categories** box and then click the **binoculars icon** (  ) next to the Expense Category the sponsoring Agency is funding.
5. On the **Sponsored Travel** page, enter the **Reimburse Agency** or **Payment in Kind** amount the sponsor is funding for each expense item listed.
6. You may enter any helpful remarks in the **Additional Comments** field.
7. Complete the **Sponsoring Organization Information**. Required fields are indicated by a red asterisk.
8. When finished, click the **Save** button at the bottom of the page.
9. To exit, select the **Financial Summary** menu option.
10. Verify that the amount in the first line in the **Enter Your Trip Allocations** table equals the Allocable Total amount in the **Summary of Expense Categories** box.
11. If VA is responsible for any amount, reallocate expenses in the **Trip Allocations Table**, as necessary.
12. When finished, submit the **Travel Authorization** by selecting the **Submit Document** menu option.

## APPENDIX F: PRE-EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

In order to reduce travel expenses per Executive Order 13589, Promoting Efficient Spending (November 9, 2011), initial pre-employment interviews should be performed using conference calls or video conferencing. Follow-up pre-employment interview travel expenses may be paid when considered necessary by the authorizing official.

A. The VA facility performing the interview has the option to reimburse travel expenses for pre-employment interview, whether the interviewee is a Federal employee traveling in a non-duty status, or a non-Federal employee/new hire. Pre-employment interview travel expenses are discretionary expenses, not mandatory reimbursement expenses ([41 C.F.R. § 301-75.100](#)).

B. When travel expenses are authorized for pre-employment interview, the travel authorization and travel claim must be submitted in VA's travel system.

C. Pre-employment travel for an interviewee who is a VA employee in a non-duty status, requires:

1. The office or station requesting the pre-employment travel and authorized expenses must be the interviewing office. The office or station requesting the pre-employment interview not the employee's current supervisor will approve pre-employment travel expenses.
2. The office or station requesting the pre-employment travel must establish a user profile in VA's travel system, or if a user profile already exists the hiring station's travel administrator must submit a Profile Move Request to move the profile under the hiring station temporarily for interview travel. When completing the Profile Move Request the office or station requesting the pre-employment travel should indicate on the form that the purpose is for interview travel. The office or station requesting the pre-employment travel must notify the interviewee, that their user profile is being temporarily moved as travel authorizations associated with the employee's current job responsibilities cannot be submitted until their user profile has been returned. Moved profiles must be reverted to their original organization within five business days.
3. Once the profile is established or transferred the office or station requesting the pre-employment travel must prepare and approve a travel authorization.
4. Pre-employment interview travel authorizations must have a purpose code of Invitational Travel.
5. Receipts are required for authorized expenses in accordance with [Vol XIV Travel](#), and [Appendix I: Receipt Requirements](#) in this chapter.

6. After the travel authorization is approved, moved profiles must be reverted to their original organization, to accomplish this a second Profile Move Request must be submitted. The move request must indicate that the purpose of move is interview travel and that the profile is being returned to the previous organization.
  7. The CBA travel card of the interviewing office may be used to purchase the airline ticket (if authorized). If lodging and/or rental car reservations are authorized, the interviewee is required to arrange for them using their personal credit card.
  8. Interviewees must be notified of their reimbursement limitations based on the per diem rates for the TDY location.
  9. When a Federal employee is on pre-employment interview travel, they must be in a non-duty status
  10. An interviewee who is a Federal employee in a non-duty status cannot use their IBA travel card for pre-employment interview travel expenses as they are not on official travel acting in their capacity as a Federal employee.
- D. Pre-employment travel for an interviewee who does not currently work for VA should be processed in accordance with [Section 010202B, Invitational Travel](#).

## APPENDIX G: TRAVEL ENTITLEMENTS FOR UNIQUE VA EMPLOYEES

VA Federal employees are entitled to travel entitlements regardless of grade or status (part time, full time, term or temporary employees). Other VA employees may or may not be entitled to travel reimbursements based their program assignment with VA.

**Without Compensation (WOC) Employees/Invitational Travelers:** As defined by Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), an individual “without compensation” would be considered an “invitational traveler” for TDY entitlements. If the VA required official travel by WOC employees, they could be paid as invitational travelers.

**Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Employees:** Per VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, details of these employees may be made on a reimbursable, non-reimbursable, or a shared cost basis. Costs associated with an IPA assignment must include pay provisions with specific salary rate(s), any provisions for cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), fringe benefits, travel and relocation expenses, and income derived from certain private consulting work (usually considered as part of the pay of university employees). The Optional Form 69, Assignment Agreement, issued by OPM, will be completed by the requesting official and signed by the employee (see attached). Part 12 of Optional Form 69, Travel and Transportation indicates: (1) Whether the Federal agency or State or local agency will pay travel and transportation expenses to, from, and during the assignment as specified in Chapter 3344 of the Federal Personnel Manual, and (2) which travel, and relocation expenses will be included. Based on the agreement, if VA were responsible for the travel and transportation, the federal employee would be established in VA travel system and paid accordingly for any TDY costs.

**Fee Basis Employees: Per VA Handbook 5007, Part II, Appendix F:**

“Compensation for fee-basis employees will be made on a lump sum basis for each visit. The fee will be determined on the basis of the actual service rendered, plus the cost of transportation, if required, including per diem at the applicable rate if travel is required.” The travel costs are part of their fee and not a separate travel reimbursement.

**Contract Employees:** Travel entitlements for contractor employees falls under the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) (which relies in large part, on each contractor's own travel rules). Some contracts include a special clause that addresses travel costs. The contractor needs to speak with the Contracting Officer or Contracting Officer Representative if it isn't known what rules apply to the individual contract. Contract employees are not reimbursed travel expenses through VA's Travel System.

## APPENDIX H: PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING AN OUTSTANDING TRAVEL ADVANCE

An outstanding travel advance issued to an employee for TDY expenses is an amount due to the Government, until it is offset or paid back. No bill of collection will be issued for an outstanding advance, as it also establishes another debt owed to the Government. For example, if you have an outstanding travel advance for \$1,000 and you establish a bill of collection for \$1,000, there would now be two separate debts of \$1,000 each showing as owed to the Government.

An outstanding unliquidated travel advance is recoverable by offset from current pay, retired pay or other amounts owed the employee by the United States Government. A travel advance debt is excluded from the Federal Salary Offset provisions under 5 U.S.C. § 5514 because salary offset to recoup a travel advance is specifically provided for in 5 U.S.C. § 5705 (also see 38 C.F.R. 1.980(c)). This means that prior notice of certain administrative rights, such as the right to dispute the debt, is not required before commencing salary offset. However, the employee will be officially notified of these rights at the time of offset or as soon as possible after salary offset or collection has begun. For additional information, refer to chapters in [Vol XII, Debt Management](#).

Once an outstanding unliquidated travel advance has been confirmed, the VA Financial Services Center and the facility making the advance will work together to ensure the outstanding travel advance is repaid by the employee. Authorizing officials will counsel employees with an outstanding travel advance. An advance is for a specific purpose and will be returned immediately, if not used for that purpose. Title 5 U.S.C. § 5705 does not contain a restriction on the amount that may be recouped to recover a travel advance from current pay, retired pay or other amounts owed the employee by the United States Government. Therefore, the entire amount of any unliquidated travel advance will be recouped at once, i.e., within two pay periods or 30 days. If collection is not accomplished within 30 days, interest and other late payment charges will be assessed. For additional information, again refer to chapters in [Vol. XII, Debt Management](#). The Federal Claims Collection Standards (31 C.F.R. 901.8) and VA regulation 38 C.F.R. 1.914 (formerly 38 C.F.R. 1.917) also authorize the use of repayment plans. There is no prohibition in 5 U.S.C. § 5705 against establishing a repayment plan to recoup the travel advance. However, repayment agreements may only be used when it is determined that collection in one lump sum would create an undue financial hardship and will be set up to recoup the advance as soon as possible.

A debt arising from an outstanding unliquidated travel advance is not subject to waiver consideration under 5 U.S.C. § 5584 and 38 C.F.R. 1.963a. This is because the unliquidated advance issued to the employee is not an erroneous payment. Only an erroneous liquidated travel advance is appropriate for waiver consideration. Such requests for waiver of a liquidated travel advance will be submitted to the Committee on

Waivers and Compromises (COWC) of jurisdiction in accordance with VA financial policies and procedures in [Vol XI Committee on Waivers and Compromises](#).

However, in accordance with Comptroller General Opinion B-226842 (June 28, 1988), a waiver will only be granted by a COWC if:

- The advance was made to cover expenses erroneously authorized;
- The employee relied on the authorization as proper; and
- The employee actually spent the advance on the duly authorized, but erroneous travel orders.

In addition, a waiver is only appropriate to the extent that the employee is indebted to the Government for repayment of only the amount of the advance still owed after legitimate expenses have been claimed and the total authorized and claimed amount has been applied to the advance.

## APPENDIX I: RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS

A. Receipts will be attached as supporting documentation to the travel claim into the travel system. Where it is impracticable to furnish receipts, the failure to do so will be fully explained on the travel claim. Mere inconvenience in the matter of asking for receipts will not be considered.

B. Receipts are required for all other travel expenses only when the amount is in excess of \$75 or when required by the approving official.

C. Receipts are required for the following expenses, regardless of amount, and authorization or approval is required by the official who authorized the travel:

1. Authorized excess baggage (exceeding weight, size or number of pieces carried free by the carrier); and

2. Transfer, checking and storage for handling Government property – receipt will show that storage was solely on account of official business and that charges or tips at transportation terminals are for handling Government property.

3. Common carrier transportation – ticketed itineraries for the use of commercial air, rail or bus service. Note: Itineraries used for booking purposes do not remain in the travel system for the required period of 6 years and will be submitted as a receipt with the travel claim. The itinerary must show the price of the ticket and confirmation of payment.

4. Commercial communications services (pre-paid phone cards, cell phones, Internet connections, long-distance calls when Government services are not available) – receipt will show total amount paid and a justification that services were used for official business. When a cell phone is used for official communication, each call will be documented showing additional cost incurred outside of the normal usage covered in the cell phone contract.

5. Dry-cleaning and laundry – reasonable costs for personal laundry, dry-cleaning and/or pressing of clothing incurred during TDY travel (not after returning to/arriving at official station) are a separately reimbursable expense when travel within the Continental United States (CONUS) requires at least 6 consecutive nights of lodging. A receipt is not required for coin-operated dry-cleaning and laundry machines.

6. Foreign travel:

- Fees for cashing U.S. Government checks or drafts reimbursing traveler for travel expenses only incurred in foreign countries.

- Commissions for conversion of currency in foreign countries.

- Fees in connection with issuance of official/diplomatic passports and visas; costs of photographs for passports and visas; costs of birth, health and identity certificates; affidavits; and inoculation which cannot be obtained at a Federal dispensary.
7. Lodging – to support all lodging costs for which an allowance is claimed under the lodgings-plus per diem system. A statement instead of a receipt may be accepted for the fee or service charge incurred for the use of Government quarters.
  8. Professional Administrative Services – include clerical assistance, computers, printers, fax machines, scanners, room rental, guides, and interpreters.
  9. Rental car – all rental car costs for which an allowance is claimed, including gasoline and insurance for travelers who are on temporary duty in foreign countries, but only when the foreign country requires such insurance. The cost of the rental car (including taxes and fees) will be input as a total amount in the travel system under transportation/rental car. Other authorized expenses (e.g., gasoline and/or authorized insurance for foreign TDY) will be included as a separate miscellaneous expense.
  10. Shipments of government property by freight or express – when property needed by the traveler exceeds the baggage allowance (e.g., if a Government Bill of Lading is not used), the traveler will explain the circumstances for the use of freight or express. The receipt will show the original point of shipment, destination, the number of packages, the contents and separate weight of each package, and the rate and amount(s) paid.

## APPENDIX J: Procedures for Alternate Submission of a Travel Claim

In order to request an FSC global system administrator to alternately submit a travel claim, the procedures listed below will be followed:

1. Prepare the travel claim in compliance with the FTR and VA policy, e.g., required documents and receipts are attached.
2. If the traveler is not incapacitated or deceased, print a copy of the prepared travel claim from VA's Travel System and add the following statement on the last page of the travel claim hard copy for the traveler to sign: "I certify this claim is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that payment or credit has not been received by me . I understand there are severe criminal and civil penalties for knowingly submitting a false, fictitious or fraudulent claim. (18 USC Sections 287 and 1001, and 31 USC Section 3729)".
3. If the traveler is incapacitated or deceased the certification to be added on the travel claim hard copy is as follows: "To the best of my knowledge and belief, I certify this claim is true and correct and that payment or credit has not been received by the traveler. I understand there are severe criminal and civil penalties for knowingly submitting a false, fictitious or fraudulent claim. (18 USC Sections 287 and 1001, and 31 USC Section 3729)".
4. Should a traveler be incapacitated, requiring their travel claim be alternately submitted, the employee's guardian or fiduciary, appointed under applicable State or other law, respectively, is authorized to sign a hard copy of the travel claim on behalf of the incapacitated employee. A deceased employee's executor/administrator of his/her estate, that has been appointed pursuant to applicable state law, is authorized to sign and date a hard copy of the travel claim to certify on behalf of the deceased employee.
5. Obtain the traveler's, or if applicable, the guardian, fiduciary, executor, or administrator's signature and date on the travel claim hard copy, then attach a PDF of the certified travel claim and documentation substantiating the alternate certifier is authorized to certify the travel claim on behalf of the traveler in VA's travel system.
6. If the traveler is deceased, prior to the alternate submission of the travel claim ensure the traveler's supervisor has taken the necessary action with the FSC Vendorizing Unit to ensure the traveler's reimbursement will be paid to the correct bank account once it is alternately submitted and approved.
7. Within one business day of completing step 5 above, the travel arranger is required to send an email to [VAFSCALTSUBMIT@va.gov](mailto:VAFSCALTSUBMIT@va.gov) requesting alternate submission of the travel claim providing the travelers name and travel claim number.

8. Within three business days of receiving a travel claim for alternate submission, the FSC global system administrator will:
  - a. Verify the travel claim is compliant with FTR and VA policy and the required certification and the alternate certifier's substantiating documentation is attached, and alternately submit the claim for approval.
  - b. If the FSC global administrator identifies the travel claim needs correction they will notify the requesting travel arranger by email within three business days of receiving the request, listing the necessary corrections. The FSC global administrator will, under comments in the travel claim, note the date the alternate submission request was received and the date it was returned for correction.
9. If a travel claim correction involves a change in the reimbursable amount the travel arranger will repeat steps 2 through 5, and step 7.