

Considerations for Out-of-State Travel

Out-of-state travel can be a costly undertaking for an agency. The following Considerations are provided as an aid to agency heads and their delegates when deciding whether to approve any travel, but particularly out-of-state travel involving three (3) or more employees or an estimated combined or total cost of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) or more.

1. The following questions should be asked concerning any travel to be paid for by the State:
 - a. Can the travel be avoided? Are there other, more cost effective alternatives?
 - b. Can unavoidable travel be reasonably conducted more efficiently and economically?
2. No travel should be conducted unless it is demonstrably in the best interest of the State.
3. Travel should be conducted as economically as circumstances permit.
 - a. This means, for example, that air travel, when there is no more than a very remote likelihood of incurring a penalty for change or cancellation, should be booked sufficiently in advance to qualify for a discounted fare.
 - b. If, at one's destination, a no-cost or low-cost shuttle is available from the airport to one's hotel, that shuttle should be used rather than a taxi cab or limousine.
 - c. If meals are included in a conference registration fee, travelers should partake of these meals rather than purchasing meals.
 - d. Travelers should consider a range of departure times when flying. Sometimes, leaving an hour earlier or later can result in considerable savings for the State.
4. In the case of lodging, sometimes there is a wide range of costs for similar appropriate facilities within fairly close proximity of each other. When booking lodging, one should look for the most economical comparable combination lodging and local transportation.

5. In the cases of conferences, training events, seminars, etc., the benefit of sending multiple staff members versus the cost of doing so should always be scrutinized. While at times, it may be necessary or significantly beneficial to send several staff to such events, it is frequently the case that one or two people can cover all the presentations of interest and can communicate the information of value to other members of the staff. Attendance at conferences and the like should not be thought of as an award, fringe benefit, or morale booster. It should be borne in mind that the cost of attendance at these events includes not merely registration, travel, lodging, etc., but the cost of participants' compensation and benefits as well as the possible loss of staff productivity.
6. In the case of training, consideration should be given to the availability of teleconferences or webinars that provide the desired instruction while avoiding the costs of travel.
7. Are face-to-face meetings, when such meetings involve out-of-state travel, really necessary? Could the same business be conducted as effectively by telephone, email or other means? If so, travel should be avoided.
8. Travelers should be kept mindful that all travel for the State is subject to the State's statutes and policies, including a number of limitations. Among these are:
 - a. Reimbursements for lodging and meals shall not exceed the lower of the actual amounts incurred or the maximum amounts allowable for the type and location of expense.
 - b. Reimbursements for lodging while attending a conference shall not exceed the least expensive single room rate published in the conference brochure for its designated lodging establishments.
9. Travelers should investigate the availability of special governmental lodging rates and take advantage of them when they are available and produce a savings for the State.

No set of guidelines or considerations can ever be complete or may be absolutely applicable in every set of circumstances. Still, it is hoped that these Considerations will prove helpful in making the best decisions possible.