

So you think you want to travel?

One may think of a UI business trip as going from your home to the airport, flying to a meeting, spending a couple nights there in a hotel and then returning on the same route. But this is also UI travel:

- Get in personal car, drive 100 miles.
- Get in UI colleague's county owned car, drive another 100 miles.
- Get in a non-UI employee's car and drive 300 more miles.
- Stay at hotel, but also pay for the non-UI person's room.
- Stop at Wal-mart to get teaching supplies and lead a seminar all day.
- Travel back the 300 miles that evening, purchasing Mountain Dew's along the way and buying gas for the non-UI person's car.
- Teach the seminar at another location the next day and stay at a different hotel that night.
- Finally return home via the county car after buying more gas for it, and your own car.

If that schedule doesn't make you crazy, **trying to explain it to the financial technician will.**

I appreciate all the ways you try to control travel costs and still get your jobs done effectively and efficiently. So here are a few pointers to help get your travel claim processed effectively and efficiently. Administrative Procedure Manual devotes almost all of Chapter 70 to this subject and I recommend it to you for some light bedtime reading. See also "Lifecycle of a Travel Claim."

Travel Authorization: In order to be reimbursed by the UI, your travel must be authorized. This serves at least two purposes; 1) provides for accountability of UI funds, and 2) protects the traveler and the UI in case of an accident or injury while traveling. Once you've decide that travel is necessary and that funds are available, you should fill out a travel authorization request, which is on the FCS website. You don't have to have all of the travel details nailed down before you submit your authorization request. The travel dates can be adjusted and the budget numbers can be changed without redoing the whole process. Even if the trip gets cancelled, it's a lot easier to cancel a travel authorization than it is to explain how come we traveled without one.

Travel Reimbursement: Basically, look at this way: I have got to prove to that Scrooge-like technician that I did spend this money. Original receipts are the *key*:

ORIGINAL RECEIPTS

- If it's an internet receipt (e.g. purchased airline tickets on-line) you must print it, sign and date it and send that via snail mail.
- **DO NOT USE** highlighters on receipts. If you need to bring special attention to a number, carefully circle it or put a post-it-note on it. When travel services scan these documents, highlighters tend to make them unreadable.
- Receipt must show that you paid for the item. This happens most often when one is purchasing conference registrations on-line. Make sure it shows a "0" balance or "paid in

full.” This can also be a problem with hotel receipts, so be careful when using express checkout.

- Receipt must be for an allowable expense.
- Receipts are **NOT** needed for meals or mileage in your personal auto.

Per Diem: This is Latin for “for the day” and is used to refer to your daily allowance the UI provides for food and incidentals, like tips. Depending on where you are staying, this allowance changes. There are 3 tiers of payments; in state, out of state and federal. The first two are obvious, and the federal category applies to a very restricted list of US cities that have very high travel costs. There are detailed rules in the APM about partial day payments and other details. However, if you accurately record your leaving time and your return time, the program attempts to compute the correct per diem. However, you should fill out the “per diem” grid on the travel reimbursement, so that your claim reflects any meals that may have been provided to you (e.g. meals provided as part of the conference registration price). So you can work the system and fast for breakfast and lunch and really splurge on supper, or eat all three meals at McDonald’s and pocket the difference.

Mileage: The UI policy is to pay you at a flat per mile rate if you use your personal auto for UI authorized travel. Currently that rate is \$.485 per mile. Travel services use MapQuest to compute mileage on travel claims. Travel starts at your normal place of business, not your home. So for example, if you are claiming mileage to get from your home to the airport, we are going to compute that mileage using the distance from your office to the airport. Once you reach your destination by car, you may have to travel within the destination city to do your work. This mileage is allowed, but please list that mileage in its own box (i.e. Vicinity Mileage) on the travel form. So you will not submit receipts for gas, oil, flat tires, etc. If you use a rental car or a government owned vehicle you may submit receipts for gasoline or other out of pocket expenses.

Traveling with others:

- **With UI employees.** You should all be listed on the travel authorization or have individual authorizations for each traveler. When you file the claims, they should match up with whom actually spent the money. Let’s say that 2 people share a hotel room. They each want to charge their budget for ½ of the room charges. However, one traveler pays the total bill. That traveler should “claim” the whole amount, but indicate the split into different budgets on his/her expense claim form.
- **With spouse or significant other.** You should be careful to separate all expenses into those that are allowed to you as UI business related and what applies to the “non-business” spouse. For example if you buy two tickets, that should be a straight forward 50/50 split. (Be careful here, not to charge your spouse’s ticket to the UI Purchasing Card.) When you get to the hotel however, this is probably not a 50/50 split. You should get the hotel to document the difference between the single occupancy rate and the double occupancy rate. You are authorized to be reimbursed at the single room rate and need only pay the difference between the two rates for your spouse.

Travel in conjunction with Annual Leave. This is also allowed by the administrative procedures manual. Be sure to have your leave approved by your supervisor, cover the whole period of

time you will be gone in your travel authorization request and document the days you were on leave on your travel claim.

Use of UI Purchasing Card. This is an excellent travel tool, because it holds down the amount of your personal cash that you have to invest in the trip and wait to be reimbursed for.

- Don't purchase meals, or room service with the card.
- Be sure to get original receipts.

NOTES BOX. This is a really helpful place for you to explain anything unusual about your claim. For example, if you are claiming a locker rental at "Mall of America" or if your flight gets cancelled from Denver to Salt Lake City and you have to spend an extra night on the road.

I will do my best to process your travel as quickly as possible. If I have all of the correct information, it should be complete in 3 weeks after you return from a trip (See Lifecycle of a Travel Claim). However, if I submit a claim with insufficient receipts or inadequate justification, there will be a delay, which doesn't help you or me. So feel free to ask any questions, and I'll help us get it right "**the first time.**"

Thanks,
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