

**GAINSHARING TRAVEL SAVINGS PROGRAM**

**1. PURPOSE**

This Notice outlines a one-year trial program which rewards MRPBS employees who save the Agency money while on official temporary duty travel (TDY). If the program proves cost efficient and beneficial to the Agency and employees, it may be expanded to other APHIS programs.

**2. BACKGROUND**

The Government Employees Incentive Awards Act, 5 U.S.C. § 4501 – 4507, authorizes an agency to pay a cash award for “efficiency” or “economy.” APHIS, MRPBS, will begin a pilot Gainsharing Travel Savings Program (GTSP) which rewards employees who save MRPBS money while on official Government travel. These savings will apply to use of less expensive lodging and/or from use of frequent flyer benefits to purchase airline tickets for official travel. Employee participation in this program is optional. **Senior Executive Service members may not participate in this program.**

**3. AWARD QUALIFICATIONS**

The amount of the award for the employee will be 50 percent of the savings on lodging expenses and/or the frequent flyer benefits for the purchase of airline tickets for official travel. **Taxes will be withheld (Federal, State, local, FICA) on the award amount.**

In most cases, the cumulative savings to the Agency must be at least \$200 before the employee is eligible to receive an award. However, awards may be processed prior to reaching the minimum dollar limit when:

- a. The employee is to be transferred or reassigned to another Government agency.
- b. It is the end of the fiscal year.

Employees may not incur additional expenses in transportation or other miscellaneous costs in an effort to reduce lodging expenses. Employees who incur additional transportation expenses must have those expenses deducted from the lodging savings. A determination must be made by the approving official that any transportation expenses incurred were excessive. Examples of excess transportation costs include, but are not limited to, renting a vehicle (when a vehicle would not normally be rented) at a TDY site

to travel to a place of free or reduced lodging; when driving a privately owned vehicle (POV), driving more miles than would normally be traveled to/from the TDY site to obtain free or reduced lodging; or, where a taxi fare is incurred which would not normally have been incurred to obtain free or reduced lodging. The amount of lodging savings must be reduced when excess transportation costs are incurred while staying at lodging more distant from the TDY site.

As explained in the Responsibilities Section below, employees must obtain the approval of their supervisor to participate in the GTSP prior to each trip. Sufficient information should be included to ensure the supervisor can determine the agency and employee benefits to be derived.

All employees must utilize hotels/motels that meet the requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990. Hotels in compliance can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel>. Employees should use caution when selecting hotels/motels to ensure the surroundings are suitable, safe, and project a favorable image of the Agency.

When employees share a room while on official travel, there may be a lodging savings. The employees should arrange to be billed separately. If this is not possible, a daily rate must be determined for each employee. Divide the total lodging costs by the number of employees and the number of nights to arrive at a daily rate for each employee.

#### 4. TRAVEL COVERED

- a. All TDY travel with lodging expenses, foreign and domestic, will be covered under this program.
- b. The first 30 days of extended TDY travel (i.e., a detail of more than 30 days where a reduced per diem amount is required) will be covered under this program.

#### 5. LODGING SAVINGS

- a. In all cases, employees must ensure that the impact of their actions does not interfere with the Agency mission. For example, formal meetings offer the ability to interact both during the meeting and in between meeting sessions, which could be potentially lost if the employee was lodging elsewhere.

Employees who participate in the program can receive cash awards under the following circumstances:

- (1) For incurring lodging expenses at a daily rate which is less than the maximum lodging rate for the locality under the lodgings plus method. **However, any savings at hotels identified under the GSA Federal Premier Lodging Program Properties do not qualify for the travel savings award. This Program and affiliated hotels can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.gsa.gov/lodging>.**

- (2) When staying with relatives or friends while on official travel and not incurring any lodging costs. They will receive one-half of the lodging rates for the locality toward the travel savings award.
  - (3) When savings result from shared accommodations with other Federal employees. Both employees must be willing to share accommodations and have prior approval from their supervisors to do so.
- b. The following circumstances **do not** qualify as savings for the GTSP:
- (1) When an employee is on travel where lodging was prepaid or prearranged through contractual arrangements with the hotel. However, any savings resulting from shared accommodations with other Government employees under such arrangements **do** qualify for the travel savings award.
  - (2) For lodging costs incurred on personal time such as annual leave during official travel or any other type of personal preference travel used in conjunction with official travel.
  - (3) For individual lodging cost savings at hotels identified under the GSA Federal Premier Lodging Program Properties. This Program and affiliated hotels can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.gsa.gov/lodging>.

## **6. FREQUENT FLYER BENEFITS**

Employees who obtain a free coach class ticket with frequent flyer benefits earned on official Government travel and/or personal travel are eligible for the travel savings program. Savings will be measured against the contract rate in effect at the time of the flight. If there is no contract rate, then the lowest available non-restricted coach fare at the time the reservation is made will be used as the basis for measurement of the savings. Again, the amount of the award for the employee will be 50 percent of the savings.

## **7. MISCELLANEOUS AND INCIDENTAL EXPENSES (M&IE)**

Employees returning to their residence early to save lodging expenses and M&IE may also include this savings (i.e., returning home later in the evening (after normal working hours) instead of waiting until the next day). However, employees who choose to claim 50 percent of this savings towards a GTSP, will earn no compensatory time for travel outside normal duty hours.

## **8. RESPONSIBILITIES**

a. Employees will:

- (1) Request, in advance of each trip and in writing, to participate in the GTSP and obtain supervisory approval.

- (2) Complete, initial, and date the APHIS Form 176, Travel Savings Form. (Attachment 1) Instructions for completing the APHIS Form 176 are on the reverse side of the form. Employees are responsible for computing their own cost savings and providing supporting documentation to substantiate the claim.
- (3) Submit the completed APHIS Form 176 with the AD-616, Travel Voucher, to the travel approving official. (Attachment 2 is a completed sample of the APHIS Form 176.)
- (4) When the total travel savings is \$200 or more, or when appropriate, the employee will sign and date the APHIS Form 176 and submit the form to the travel approving official.
- (5) As with any travel situation, employees are to use their Government issued travel card whenever possible. In addition, employees are reminded that they are expected to maintain high professional and ethical standards that reflect favorably on the Federal Government and promote a positive image of the Agency.

b. The Travel Approving Official will:

- (1) If appropriate, approve GTSP requests prior to travel.
- (2) Review, initial, and date the APHIS Form 176.
- (3) If the cumulative savings is \$200 or more, or when appropriate, sign and date the APHIS Form 176.
- (4) Prepare an AD-287-2, Recommendation and Approval of Awards. (Attachment 3 is a completed sample of the AD-287-2.)
- (5) Sign and date the AD-287-2 as the “Recommending Individual.”

c. The Award Approving Official will:

- (1) After review, sign and date the AD-287-2.
- (2) Forward the original AD-287-2 and the APHIS Form(s) 176 to the Human Resources Division, Human Resources Operations (Riverdale/Washington or Minneapolis, as appropriate) for payroll processing.

## 9. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- a. Division Directors are responsible for preparing quarterly GTSP reports. These reports should be emailed to Donna Ford, Chief, Financial Services Branch, Financial Management Division, within 10 calendar days after the close of each quarter. Negative reports also should be submitted. The following information should be included in the report for each employee:
  - (1) Name,
  - (2) Social Security Number,
  - (3) Dates of Travel,
  - (4) Travel Authorization Number(s),
  - (5) TDY Location(s),
  - (6) Type of Savings (lodging, frequent flier coupon, etc.), and
  - (7) Amount of Savings for Each Savings Type.
- b. During the one year trial period, the quarterly reports from each Division Director will be reviewed for efficiency and the quantity of participation. Concerns throughout the year will be evaluated to determine the continuation and effectiveness of the program. Periodic discussions with the MRPBS Deputy Administrator will occur throughout the year. At the end of the trial period, the MRPBS Deputy Administrator will decide whether to continue and/or to expand the program.

## 10. INQUIRIES

- a. Direct any questions or comments to Donna Ford or any member of the FMD Travel Unit at 301-734-5412.
- b. This Notice is available on the APHIS Employee Library website at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/library>

/s/

William J. Hudnall  
Deputy Administrator  
MRP Business Services

3 Attachments