

**NORTHERN PLAINS AREA
Policy Memorandum**

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| DATE: | March 12, 2008 |
| SUBJECT: | Northern Plains Area GovTrip Policy |
| NUMBER: | PM-08-003 |
| EFFECTIVE DATE: | Immediately Until Replaced or Superseded |

1. Purpose

This document establishes the policy for implementing GovTrip for the Northern Plains Area.

2. Roles

Traveler: Anyone who travels on official business for USDA/ARS.

Travel Arranger/Preparer: A designated individual who will input and digitally sign trip requests and prepare reimbursement claims in GovTrip for other travelers.

Reviewing Official: A designated official located at the Area Office, Headquarters or FAS level who will review trip requests relating to foreign, contributed (sponsored), and non-federal (invitational) travel.

Approving Official (AO): An individual given authority to authorize/approve travel, obligate travel funds, approve trip arrangements, and authorize travel expenses. **All Approving Officials are required to have a Delegation of Authority Authorization to Access GovTrip on behalf of the managers/supervisors who they will be approving documents for (see Exhibit 1).**

Federal Agency Travel Administrator (FATA): A designated individual responsible for the overall management of GovTrip at the organization level. A FATA may serve as a systems administrator, a resource manager, or an administrator responsible for loading, updating and maintaining all the tables including: personnel tables, organizational tables, group tables, permission tables, routing tables, lines of accounting, budgets, production of reports and acting as help desk for Users and Authorizing Officials.

3. Standard Procedures

For regular travel (travel that is not contributed, foreign or non-federal):

- Since most of the designated Approving Officials in GovTrip are not the fund holders, locations will need to implement their own process for ensuring the fund holder/Research Leader has approved the travel. Exhibit 1 is an example of what can be used to gather information for entry into GovTrip and it can be uploaded into GovTrip to provide supporting documentation. The travel authorization however should be signed by the fund holder/Research Leader and uploaded as verification that the fund holder/Research Leader approves the trip (see Exhibit 2).
- Traveler will submit travel information to their respective Travel Arranger.
- Travel Arranger will input travel information into GovTrip to create the travel authorization and make trip reservations (i.e. airline, hotel, car rental, etc).
- Travel Arranger will stamp the document signed and it will then be forwarded electronically to the Approving Official.
- Approving Official will receive an e-mail to inform him/her of a pending document awaiting approval.
- Approving Official will log into GovTrip, review the pending travel request and will have the options to approve, cancel, edit, or return the document to the travel arranger for changes/corrections.
- Once travel authorization is approved, funds are obligated in Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS), reservations are made and a ticket date is issued, and Travel Management Center (TMC) fees are assessed.
- Upon completion of the travel, Traveler turns in receipts to Travel Arranger.
- Travel Arranger creates a travel voucher from the travel authorization and uploads (or faxes) the receipts and pertinent documentation to GovTrip.
- Travel Arranger prints off the travel voucher and has the employee and the fund holder or supervisor sign the document and uploads (or faxes) the document to GovTrip and then stamps the document as signed.
- Approving Official will receive an e-mail to inform him/her of a pending document awaiting approval.
- Approving Official will log into GovTrip, review the pending travel voucher and will have the options to approve, cancel, edit, or return the document to the travel arranger for changes/corrections.
- Once travel voucher is approved, funds are amended in FFIS to reflect actual costs (actual costs are de-obligated from travel authorization if authorization was more than actual expenses or additional costs are added to travel authorization amount if it was more than the original travel authorization).
- Traveler and bank receive appropriate disbursements.
- No hard copies are needed for files. GovTrip is the official record and it will be maintained for the 6 years, 3 month requirement.

For contributed travel (required lead time is 4 weeks):

- Contributed travel must be approved by the Designated Area Ethics Advisor prior to input into GovTrip. The following documents must be forwarded to the Area

Transportation Assistant

1. Through letter of request (see Exhibit 3)
 2. Letter of invitation from contributing organization stating the purpose and what they will be paying for.
 3. Conflict of Interest form (see Exhibit 4)
 4. Receipt of Funds from Non-Federal Source form (see Exhibit 5)
- Once approval is received, Travel Arranger needs to upload (or fax) approval documents into GovTrip.
 - The FATA will be required to add sponsor information if not listed in the GovTrip system.
 - Similar process as regular travel is then followed except that a Reviewing Official will review the travel authorization prior to it being forwarded to the Approving Official.
 - Area Office will maintain hard copy records until notified by Ethics Office that original signature copies are not needed.

For foreign travel (required lead time is 60 days for passport re-validation; 90 days for passport issuance):

- All foreign travel must be approved by the Area Director. Submit a letter requesting foreign travel and stating the justification to attend.
- Once approved, notification will be sent to the location from the travel desk stating approval of the trip and what needs to be submitted for the foreign travel.
- The following documents must be forwarded to the Area Transportation Assistant
 1. Proposed flight or travel itinerary (actual itinerary information isn't known until entry into GovTrip).
 2. Visa information (if applicable)
 3. Contact information
- Upon receipt of the approval, the location will enter the trip information into Federal Travel Information System (FTIS). This has to be completed before Headquarters will release official passports.
- Once approval is received, Travel Arranger needs to upload (or fax) approval documents into GovTrip.
- Similar process as regular travel is then followed except that a Reviewing Official will review the travel authorization prior to it being forwarded to the Approving Official.

For non-federal travel (required lead time is 4 weeks):

- Travel Arranger will send non-federal traveler information to FATA for input into FFIS and GovTrip (see Exhibit 6).
- Once entered, FATA will send notification to Travel Arranger to proceed with entering travel authorization into GovTrip.
- Similar process as regular travel is then followed except that a Reviewing Official

will review the travel authorization (due to Area Director's approval required for all non-federal travel) prior to it being forwarded to the Approving Official.

Centrally Billed Accounts (CBAs) – CBAs are travel card account numbers issued to USDA for which the government guarantees payment. All authorizations which include CBAs as a method of payment for airfare will require a Reviewing Official's approval.

CBAs can be used for payment of airfare for:

1. Foreign travel
2. Non-federal travelers
3. Employees who do not have a government travel credit card.

CBA's are maintained and reconciled at the Area Office level. Since all travel authorizations which contain CBAs as a form of payment for airfare are sent through the Area Office for reviewing, there is no need to send any additional information on the CBA for reconciliation.

4. Applicability

These documents are intended to provide policy and guidance to NPA staff. They are a tool in ensuring compliance with Federal and Agency regulations, policies, and procedures. These tools intend to promote consistency and fairness, and provide a reference point for decision making. They are not intended to limit or restrict the use of good business judgment or actions of responsible individuals.

Area policy or guidance may be reviewed, revised, or waived by the Area Director in situations presenting unique facts. Requests for waiver or reconsideration of higher level policy must be endorsed by the Area Director.

5. Point of Contact

For further information, please contact the Deputy Area Director.

/s/

W.H. BLACKBURN
Area Director
Northern Plains Area

EXHIBIT 1

[Print on letterhead]

I delegate to _____ the authority to access GovTrip on my behalf to approve:

____ Travel Authorizations

____ Travel Vouchers

Before approving any of the above documents in GovTrip, the person delegated this authority must provide a paper copy of the document that exactly duplicates the authorization or voucher and obtain my signature. The signed documents must be uploaded into GovTrip and attached to the electronic documents.

(Signature – Delegator)

(Date)

I have read and understand the delegation of authority to access GovTrip on behalf of

_____.

(Signature – Delegatee)

(Date)

EXHIBIT 2

Date: _____

Information for Travel Authorization (GovTrip)

TRAVELER COMPLETES FORM AND SIGNS AT THE BOTTOM

Name: _____ Travel Credit Card? Yes No

Dates of Travel: _____ Meeting Dates: _____

Is this for training? Yes No If yes, ensure SF-182 is completed & approved: _____

Itinerary (City/State/Country): _____

Departing From: (Duty Station or Residence) _____

Purpose of Travel (name of meeting, paper, sponsor, etc.): _____

Reservations needed for lodging? Yes Preferred Hotel Name: _____ No - Reservations made outside of GovTrip (please estimate the hotel expenses below) No lodging required

Per diem: Lodging \$ _____ M&IE \$ _____ Total \$ _____ x No. of days: _____ = \$ _____

Act. Sub.: Lodging \$ _____ M&IE \$ _____ Total \$ _____ x No. of days: _____ = \$ _____

Does traveler need actual subsistence? Yes No **Estimated Lodging/night \$** _____

If yes, attach documentation showing rates at hotel. (CD cannot authorize actual subsistence; if work travel, AD signs, if meeting travel, HQR signs. If FMD has issued message on email, we do not need documentation - attach email message.)

Taxi/limo? Yes No Est. \$ _____ Rental vehicle? Yes No Est. \$ _____

Registration/tuition? Yes No Est. \$ _____ Includes lodging/meals? Yes No

Registration/tuition paid by Government Purchase Card **ONLY**

Miscellaneous items? Yes No

Parking \$ _____ Gas \$ _____ Official phone/fax \$ _____

Hotel tax \$ _____ Laundry \$ _____ Personal phone \$ _____

Other \$ _____ Itemize: _____

Airfare \$ _____ Charged to: _____ Travel card CBA [code TR] Travel agency fee \$ _____

Does traveler intend to use a penalty ticket? Yes No **TRIP TOTAL \$** _____

Reservations needed for Common Carrier?

Yes

No

No common carrier required

- Reservations made outside of GovTrip System

Authorized mode of travel:

| Amount | | Miles |
|----------------|---|-------|
| Common Carrier | POV in lieu of Common Carrier (48.5 cents/mile) | |
| GOV | POV in lieu of GOV (28.5 cents/mile) | |
| Train | POV to/from airport (48.5 cents/mile) | |

(Authorized mode of travel = common carrier; traveler requests POV, mileage = 48.5 cents/mile NTE cost of airfare. Authorized mode of travel = GOV; traveler requests POV, mileage = 28.5 cents/mile)

Does traveler need an advance? Yes No If yes, \$ _____
All advances and travel reimbursements will be DIRECT DEPOSIT.

Will traveler be taking annual leave? Yes No If yes, dates/hours: _____

| Contributed Travel | |
|--|--------------------|
| Does this travel include any non-ARS funds? | Yes No |
| If yes, list contributor: _____ | |
| Attach a "letter of offer" (requires name/address of person to contact along with a description of what is being provided either "in-kind" (contributor arranges payment for airfare/lodging/food), refund credit (traveler charges his account; contributor issues ARS a check after voucher is filed), or other (e.g., registration fee waived.) No ARS traveler can receive money directly. | |
| Refund credit \$ _____ | "In-kind" \$ _____ |
| Complete forms "Conflict of Interest Analysis" and "Approval and Report of Travel Funds Received from Non-federal Sources." | |

| Foreign Travel |
|---|
| (A 60- to 90-day lead time is required to process all authorization and passport/visa forms.) |
| √ Submit a memo through the RL and CD to Dr. Blackburn to receive authorization for foreign travel (include destination, dates of travel, reason for travel, and explanation on how this will benefit ARS). |
| √ The trip must be entered in the ARIS Foreign Travel Information System (see your secretary for the form). |

√ You must have an official passport (check expiration date).

Host organization (name, address, phone number, fax number, email address):

Personal contact (name, address, phone number, fax number, email address):

Work contact (Name of Secretary/Admin. Officer of traveler's unit; work address, phone number, fax number, email address):

(Traveler's Signature) (Date)

(Research Leader/Fund Holder Signature) (Date)

Travel Arranger enters data in GovTrip and uploads this signed form and any other trip-related documents to GovTrip. Once stamped signed in GovTrip, the authorization and all documents are forwarded to the Approving Official (or Reviewing Official if applicable).

EXHIBIT 3

Date

SUBJECT: Request for Approval of Foreign, Contributed Funds, etc. Travel

TO: Dr. W.H. Blackburn, Area Director

THROUGH: Linda M Sundstrom, NPA Transportation Assistant

THROUGH: (Center Director) (Must be signed or initialed by)

THROUGH: (Research Leader, Supervisor) (Must be signed or initialed by)

FROM:

Text should contain request (where and when traveling) (what the travel is for) Contributed funds request should state who is paying for the travel, what they will be paying for, and what benefits this will be for the agency

EXHIBIT 4

CONFLICT OF INTEREST ANALYSIS UNDER 41 C.F.R. § 304-1.5

ACCEPTANCE OF PAYMENT FROM A NON-FEDERAL SOURCE FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES requires in all cases that a conflict of interest analysis be performed by an authorized agency official. The "authorized official" is a designated Ethics Advisor or REE Ethics Advisor(s). To ease administration of the requirement for a conflict of interest analysis, this outline tracks the elements of the regulation. The analysis should be accomplished on this page. *Additional sheets may be attached if needed.*

IMPORTANT: Payment from a non-Federal source shall not be accepted if the authorized agency official determines that acceptance under the circumstances would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of all the facts relevant to a particular case to question the integrity of agency programs or operations.

In making this determination, an authorized agency official shall be guided by all relevant considerations, including, but not limited to:

- (1) The identity of the non-Federal source (*see reverse for identifying information*);
- (2) The purpose of the meeting or similar function;
- (3) The identity of other expected participants;
- (4) The nature and sensitivity of any matter pending at the agency affecting the interests of the non-Federal source;
- (5) The significance of the employee's role in any such matter specified in (4) above; and
- (6) The monetary value and character of the travel benefits offered by the non-Federal source.

Analysis: Acceptance of the travel WOULD cause a reasonable person with knowledge of all the facts relevant to a particular case to question the integrity of agency programs or operations?

Yes _____ **No** _____

Explain your response to the above question:

NOTE: The authorized agency official may find that, while acceptance from the non-Federal source is permissible, it is in the interest of the agency to qualify acceptance of the offered payment by, for example, authorizing attendance at only a portion of the event or limiting the type or character of benefits that may be accepted.

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The _____ qualifications _____ on _____ acceptance, _____ if _____ any, are: _____

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Recommendation of Ethics Advisor: **Accept**_____ **Do Not Accept**_____

Signature/Date:_____

EXHIBIT 5

RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS APPROVAL AND REPORT OF TRAVEL FUNDS RECEIVED FROM NON-FEDERAL SOURCES

This form must be completed in its entirety or it will be returned. 31 U.S.C. 1353, subsequently printed in Chapter 304, Part 1, of the Federal Travel Regulations, and governs the acceptance of payment for travel, subsistence, and related expenses from a non-Federal source, but not from a prohibited source, in connection with the attendance of an employee and/or accompanying spouse when applicable, at certain meetings and similar functions. Agencies are also required to submit semiannual reports of payments which total **more than \$250 per event**, and which have been accepted under this authority. The report is based on when payment is received rather than when travel is performed. All offices must submit their Approval and Report of Travel Funds Received From Non-Federal Sources for each event that totaled more than \$250 to: USDA, ARS, Financial Management Division (FMD), Travel & Relocation Services Branch (TRSB), Room 3-2176A, 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Beltsville, Maryland 20705-5114. For the period October 1 through March 31 - submit reports by **April 15** and for the period April 1 through September 30 - submit reports by **October 15**. Each Approval and Report of Travel Funds Received From Non-Federal Sources must have a copy of the Letter of Offer, Conflict of Interest Analysis, and Letter of Acceptance attached when submitted to FMD.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Employee</p> <p>1. Name: _____ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> First MI Last </div> </p> <p>2. Position Title : _____</p> <p>3. Duty Station : _____</p> <p>4. Telephone No.: (____)-____-_____</p> <p>5. Beginning Date of Travel: ____-____-_____</p> <p>6. Ending Date of Travel : ____-____-_____</p> <p>NOTES: _____ _____ _____</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Spouse(If Applicable)</p> <p>7. Name: _____ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> First MI Last </div> </p> <p>See FTR Chapter 304, Part 1, Acceptance of Payment From a Non-Federal Source for Travel Expenses and FPM Letter 451-7, Reimbursement of Travel Expenses of Individuals Attending Awards Ceremonies and REE Policy and Procedure 341.2, Acceptance of Travel Expenses form Non-Federal Sources</p> <p>8. Beginning Date of Travel: ____-____-_____</p> <p>9. Ending Date of Travel : ____-____-_____</p> <p>10. Reason for Spouse's Travel _____ _____</p> |
| Event Information | Acceptance Information |
| <p>9. Kind of event:(check one):</p> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Seminar </p> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conference <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking Engagement </p> <p>10. Location of Event:</p> <p>_____, _____ City</p> <p>State/Country</p> <p>11. Title of Event: _____</p> <p>12. Name of Event Sponsor: _____ Address: _____ _____</p> | <p>13. What expenses are being paid for by the non-Federal source?</p> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common Carrier <input type="checkbox"/> Lodging </p> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meals <input type="checkbox"/> Other(Itemize)_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>14. Value (in U.S. Dollars) received from non-Federal source:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In Kind \$ _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Paid to Agency \$ _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Explain) _____</p> |

I certify that the information provided on this form and all attached documents are true, complete, correct, and comply with the guidelines of 41 CFR Part 304-1, Federal Travel Regulations, Acceptance of Payment From a Non-Federal Source, for travel expenses, to the best of my knowledge.

Traveler's Signature _____ Date _____

I certify that I approved acceptance of the above travel, subsistence and related expenses from the non-Federal source in advance of the proposed travel being accomplished by the employee and after having reviewed the conflict of interest analysis on the reverse of this sheet.

Approving Official's _____ Date _____

Information Required for Traveler (New Employee or Non-Federal Traveler) to be Added in GovTrip and FFIS

Name (Last, First, Middle Initial):

Social Security #

Home Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Home Phone #

Emergency Contact Name:

Emergency Contact Phone #

Please Indicate New Employee or Non-Federal Traveler

Date sent to Area:

E-mail: Linda.Sundstrom@ars.usda.gov

Fax: (970) 492-7036, **Attn:** Linda Sundstrom

New employees must include payroll information since reimbursement for travel must be the same method:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Name of Bank: | |
| Routing # | |
| Account # | |
| Checking or Savings | |

If non-federal traveler would prefer payment via electronic fund transfer versus a check, please provide the information listed above.