

VA Financial Policies and Procedures  
Travel Administration

CHAPTER 1

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## 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).

The following topics are covered in this chapter:

- 010201 [Travel Authorization and Approval;](#)
- 010202 [Pre-Employment Interview and Invitational Travel;](#)
- 010203 [Blanket Travel Authorizations;](#)
- 010204 [Travel Advances;](#)
- 010205 [Travel Reimbursement Policies and Procedures;](#) and
- 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 most economically and effectively. Consideration should be given to, but not limited to, budget constraints, adherence to travel policies, environmental impact and reasonableness of expenses. VA will always consider alternatives (e.g., teleconferencing) before authorizing travel ([FTR 301-70.1](#)).

## 0102 POLICIES

### 010201 TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION AND APPROVAL.

#### A. Authorization and Approval.

1. Employees traveling on official business will have approval from direct line supervisors.
2. Except in emergencies, all travel will be authorized and approved in writing or electronically by an official to whom such authority has been delegated by the Secretary. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a current list of delegated authorities. Ordinarily, the authorization for travel is issued before travel is performed. A travel authority is necessary for a traveler to be reimbursed for travel expenses. It identifies the purpose for travel ([Appendix B](#)), 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 expense report. Failure to receive proper authorization may limit or prevent reimbursement of travel expenses.

3. No VA employee may authorize or approve his or her own travel, nor may an alternate preparer authorize or approve the travel expenses submitted 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.
4. Officials delegated to authorize or approve employee travel and supervisors of employees performing travel will instruct their subordinates of their rights, privileges and responsibilities in the performance of and reimbursement for official travel.
5. Each employee who authorizes, directs or performs travel will exercise due care and practice economy in all matters involving travel costs. Travel will be conducted at Government expense in accordance with statutory requirements and VA policy.
6. Except as provided below, employees who travel away from their official station (i.e., beyond the established local travel area) are required to perform such travel under a travel authority created in VA's E-Gov Travel Service (ETS).

**Exception.** Employees authorized to travel under [5 U.S.C. 4109](#), Government Employees Training Act (GETA), will be issued a travel authority through the ETS when such travel is performed within the local travel area of an employee's official station and the travel requires the employee to incur a per diem expense (lodging and/or meals).

7. When travel is performed within the limits of the immediate vicinity of the official station (i.e., local travel area) authorization by a travel approving official should be directed by letter, message or email. An ETS travel authority will not be issued for strictly local travel. See Volume XIV, Chapter 7, *Local Travel*, for information on local travel policies and procedures.
8. [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. Refer to [Appendix C](#) for the requirements to use VA Form 3036 for no-cost TDY travel authority, as well as a completed sample form. Should unforeseen circumstances cause the traveler to incur a necessary travel or per diem expense, the no-cost travel authority will be void for that episode of travel and a new trip-by-trip travel authorization will be created in ETS.
9. To the maximum extent possible, the travel of an employee away from his or her official station will be scheduled within the employee's regular duty hours. When it is not possible and the employee may not be paid overtime under [5 C.F.R. 550.112\(g\)](#), the authorizing official will record the reason for directing travel during those hours and will furnish a copy of the statement to the employee upon request. In addition, the authorizing official will remind the employee of his or her entitlement to file for Travel

Compensatory Time for traveling during non-duty hours. VA employees should contact their Human Resources department for current policies and procedures regarding earnings and claiming Travel Compensatory Time.

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 may 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. Refer to Volume. XIV, Chapter 8, *Relocation Packages*, for additional information on both temporary and permanent changes of station.

B. E-Gov Travel Service (ETS).

1. Document preparers (travelers and alternate preparers) and approving officials will use the ETS to prepare, audit, approve and route TDY travel authorizations; make reservations, including transportation, lodging and rental car; and process local expense vouchers and TDY expense reports. Refer to [Appendix D](#) for the procedures to reimburse travel expenses via electronic funds transfer (EFT). Local travel claims under \$10 may be prepared manually. The traveler will confirm that he or she has authorization to travel prior to departure. Authorizations are not complete until the document successfully routes through the ETS. 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.

2. Access to the ETS is limited to VA employees and invitational travelers. The latter will log into the ETS and submit their expense reports upon completion of their TDY or sign the expense reports provided to them by Alternate Preparers. The FSC's E-Gov Travel Support Group Help Desk is available to assist organizations with preparing invitational travel documents, if needed. They can be reached at [vafscetravel@va.gov](mailto:vafscetravel@va.gov) or at 866-533-0188.

3. ETS users should contact the FSC's E-Gov Travel Support Group for training session(s). These sessions are available regularly with a training schedule posted on the FSC's VA-Wide Travel website at <http://vaww.fscdirect.fsc.va.gov/tvl/eTrav.htm>. Customers may arrange a customized on-site training session by contacting the VA-Wide TDY Travel Support Group at 866-533-0188 or via email at [vafscetravel@va.gov](mailto:vafscetravel@va.gov).

4. Travelers may contact the ETS Provider's Call Center from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., EST, weekdays except on Federal holidays, at 800-356-9513. Travelers should attempt to resolve problems by contacting the facility travel coordinator or system administrator before contacting the call center. 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.

C. Exceptions for the Use of the ETS or Online Booking Engine (OBE).

1. The head of an agency may grant case-by-case exceptions to the use of the agency's ETS when in accordance with [FTR Part 301-50](#). In VA, requests for exceptions will be submitted in writing to the Office of the Secretary (00) through the Charge Card Oversight and Travel Policy Service (047E3). Requests will contain a business case analysis that justifies why the ETS should not 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 [FTR Chapter 301](#).

2. Employees will use the OBE offered by the ETS or VA TMC to reserve transportation, lodging and rental cars. Listed below are the extenuating circumstances in which a traveler is authorized an exception from using the OBE:

- 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 travel is to a remote location and it is not possible to book lodging or rental car accommodations through the ETS;
- d. When circumstance will not allow booking of travel through the OBE (e.g., ETS system is down or not available);
- e. When travel arrangements are provided in-kind by a non-Federal source;
- f. When travel is authorized under a Not-To-Exceed (NTE) travel authority; or
- g. When making travel arrangements for personal/unofficial travel in conjunction with official travel (refer to Appendix E).

3. If none of the above circumstances apply, the traveler is responsible for any additional costs resulting from the failure to use the ETS or TMC, 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. Reservations using commercial means (Orbitz, Travelocity, other travel agents, etc.) are not permitted for official travel.

4. Amendments to authorization documents are required for cancellations or changes to mode of travel including common carrier and date changes that impact reservations made in the ETS. Note the reason for the amendment in the comment section of the

authorization. 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 canceled trips.

**D. Use of Travel Management Centers (TMC).**

1. Employees will purchase transportation tickets for their official travel through VA's TMC. Some advantages of using the TMC are reporting capabilities, emergency tracking of travelers, ensuring Government rates, meeting FTR requirements and making ticket exchanging easy while on travel. The TMC may not be used for the personal travel route when combined with official travel for temporary duty travel (i.e., travel is routed through an alternate city for personal reasons prior to returning to the permanent duty station). The TMC 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 TMC, 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 TMC service charges. Reasonable TMC service charges paid by the traveler for official travel are a reimbursable travel expense. The fee will be added to the authorization by the TMC and included on the expense report. The employee is responsible for ensuring he or she has been ticketed prior to departure.
3. Employees may contact their local travel office or TMC if they need assistance with travel arrangements. Contacting the TMC directly, however, may result in higher fees for reservations.
4. Should the ETS become unavailable for any reason, employees may complete travel arrangements manually by contacting the TMC to make reservations. The TMC will complete the travel arrangements and will enter the necessary information into a queue for later processing in the ETS to generate a travel authorization once the system becomes available. Travelers will receive a notification from the ETS to review and complete the travel authorization.

**E. Temporary Duty Travel without Prior Authorization.**

1. Approving officials may authorize reimbursement of an expense post-TDY travel based on the circumstances presented. Official travel performed without any prior authorization or requiring additional time to perform the travel specified in the original or amended authorization will be supported by a justification in ETS explaining the reason why prior authorization (or an extension of time) was not obtained. Expenses not sufficiently justified or denied by the approving official will be the responsibility of the traveler.

2. All employee travel or travel time extensions, when approved post-travel, require approval by an authorizing or approving official.
3. Authority for approval of unauthorized travel does not normally constitute authority to retroactively increase or decrease a per diem or mileage rate prescribed in a travel authority. When amendments are made, the per diem and mileage rates, fixed by the original authorization, will not be increased or decreased retroactively. However, correction of obvious errors or adjustments resulting from mandatory FTR rate increases is not considered to be prohibited retroactive rate adjustments.

F. Not-To-Exceed (NTE) Travel and No Cost Travel Authority.

1. Under the 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 Online Booking Engine or Travel Card. Approving officials may authorize employees to attend training at no cost to the VA. Refer to [Appendix C](#) for information on when to prepare no cost travel authorities.
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 Authority will be issued in the ETS. The travel authority 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. Refer to [Appendix B](#) to determine whether an activity is considered a training event.

G. Non-Federal Sponsored (Donated) Travel.

When a traveler has been authorized to accept payment from a non-Federal Government entity (i.e., Donated Travel), a non-Federal Sponsored Travel Authority will be created in the ETS. This travel authority will identify the source of payment, payment type (i.e., 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 ETS when submitting the expense report. Refer to [Appendix F](#) on the procedures for creating a non-Federal Sponsored Travel Authority in ETS.

H. Local Travel (See Volume XIV, Chapter 7).

1. Field Facility Directors and the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Business Operations in VA's Central Office (VACO) will determine the area to be

covered by local travel by using the 50-Mile Rule or geographic boundaries as defined by their respective station.

2. When travel is performed within the limits of the immediate vicinity of the official station (i.e., local travel area) authorization by a travel approving official should be directed by letter, memo or email. An ETS travel authority will not be issued for strictly local travel.

3. Use of the ETS is required for preparing local travel expense vouchers greater than \$10. Refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 7, *Local Travel*, for detailed information on local travel reimbursements.

#### 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. See [Appendix E](#) for the procedures to create a travel authorization that combines personal/unofficial and official travel.

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

##### A. Pre-Employment Interview Travel.

1. The determination to pay expenses for a qualified candidate will be at the discretion of the Approving Official. Interviewee travel expenses will be paid when considered necessary by the authorizing official. 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 [FTR Chapter 301](#). VA employees who perform pre-employment interview travel will not be reimbursed using the VA ETS. When interviewing, the employee is not on official travel representing the VA under their current position.

2. The authorizing official will determine eligibility based on Office of Personnel Management (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 authorized on a trip-by-trip basis only. Open travel authorizations will not be used for pre-employment interview travel.

4. Interviewees will be instructed on pertinent VA travel policy, procedures and rules and how reimbursement vouchers/expense reports are prepared in the ETS. Interviewees will be assigned a vendor code before travel arrangements can be made in



the ETS. Preparation of the travel authority and expense report for reimbursement is the responsibility of the interviewee, although assistance may be provided by an Alternate Preparer.

5. Pre-employment travel expenses will not be authorized for an interviewee/new appointee to look for a residence at the prospective duty station.
6. The interviewee is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.
7. Travel arrangements for the interviewee may be made by the interviewing facility's Alternate Preparer in accordance with the FTR and VA policy. Common carrier transportation (air, rail, bus) and/or lodging expenses will be paid through the station's centrally billed account (CBA).
8. Interviewees are mandatory users of Government city-pair contracts with airlines and Amtrak and are bound by rules outlined in the FTR and VA policy.
9. 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.
10. 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 an expense report or local voucher.
11. Interviewees who are authorized travel should be advised to keep a record and maintain receipts of all charges until their reimbursement claim is settled.
12. Interviewee claims against the Government are forfeited if the claimant attempts to defraud the Government. Claimant is subject to disciplinary and/or criminal provisions if a false, fictitious or fraudulent claim is presented against the United States ([18 U.S.C. 287](#) and [1001](#)).

#### B. Invitational Travel.

1. Invitational travel involves VA paying for the travel of a non-Federal employee (e.g., consultants, experts, private citizens, foreign visitors). These individuals 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 [FTR Chapter 301](#) and VA policy. Invitational travel does not apply to contractor employees when work is within the scope of the contract. Except as described herein, invitational travel orders will be processed through the ETS.

2. Invitations may be issued to individuals to confer with Department personnel, participate in pre-employment interviews, 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 authorizing invitational travel should ensure, at the time the invitation is extended, that the traveler is aware that the travel arrangements will be made by VA. This is to prevent the traveler from purchasing transportation with personal funds.
  - a. For air reservations, the method of payment will be the CBA since the invitational traveler may not possess a Government travel charge card. 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 Management Center (TMC) 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 provide a personal credit card number to hold the reservation. Travelers who do not provide a credit card number will have to arrange their own lodging and rental car, if they are authorized. Travelers will be notified of the TDY location per diem rates (i.e., which define their reimbursement limit).
4. An invitational traveler must have a valid e-mail account and Social Security Number in order to process travel documents in the ETS. At this time, the ETS 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. If the above requirements are not 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 ETS. Procedures for creating a blanket travel authority are available in the ETS 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 should 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 ETS. 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 and who are not covered by an exemption, or have their card suspended or canceled 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. Refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*, for additional information.

B. Employees who are exempt from using the VA travel charge card (i.e., infrequent traveler, new appointee, pending application) will obtain travel advances by EFT. The traveler or alternate preparer will contact the approving official to request an advance on the travel authorization through the ETS. Approving officials approve EFT advances when they electronically sign the travel authorization. A travel advance will be deposited into the employee's designated financial institution 3 to 4 business days after the travel authority is approved and interfaces with VA's accounting system.

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. 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 authorized rental car. Variable expenses do not include prepaid gas (estimated cost), Global Positioning System (GPS) or Toll Collection Transponder (estimated cost);
  4. Other authorized 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. Travelers are responsible for liquidating EFT travel advances timely by completing expense vouchers within 5 business days of return to the official station. Refer to [Appendix G](#) for the procedures for collecting an outstanding travel advance.
- H. Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Cash Advances.

Employees authorized 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 pay for out-of-pocket expenses. Refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*, for VA policies and procedures to obtain ATM cash advances/withdrawals.

#### 010205 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

##### A. Claiming Reimbursement.

1. Employees will submit their claims for reimbursement of TDY expenses into ETS, along with all required receipts (refer to [Appendix H](#)), within 5 business days of return to their official station, or every 30 calendar days if on continuous or extended TDY travel status. Failure to submit a timely expense report will prevent the traveler from creating future travel authorizations.
2. Claim for reimbursement of local travel expenses will be submitted with appropriate receipts on a local expense voucher in the ETS. Refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 7, *Local Travel*, for policy and procedures to claim reimbursement for local travel expenses.
3. Under limited circumstances (e.g., invitational travel, incapacitated employee) an Alternate Preparer may submit an expense report on behalf of a traveler when he or she has been assigned the rights to do so. However, before an Alternate Preparer submits the expense report, the traveler or beneficiary (refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 5, *Travel Under Special Circumstances*) will certify in writing that he or she has reviewed the expense report and the expenses claimed are true and correct to the best of his or her knowledge, when an electronic signature is not available. The Alternate Preparer will

include/fax this certification along with all supporting documentation (e.g., receipts, authorization to use other-than-coach travel, authorization for actual expenses) with the expense report.

4. The employee will be reimbursed within 30 calendar days after submitting a properly prepared expense report to the agency's designated approving office.

5. Travelers who knowingly or unknowingly defraud or attempt to defraud the Government will not only forfeit their rights to reimbursement 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 or apparent violation of applicable regulations.

#### B. Documentation and Review of Expenses Claimed.

1. The traveler or Alternate Preparer, is required to fax or scan all required receipts (refer to [Appendix H](#)) and supporting documentation into the electronic expense report or local expense voucher in the ETS before submitting them to the approving official. The traveler or Alternate Preparer will ensure that all receipts are attached to the electronic voucher and that the receipts are legible. Electronic documents are considered to be original documents. Travelers who fax receipts into the ETS are not required to maintain their paper receipts as the ETS will retain travel documents, receipts and other documentary evidence for 6 years and 3 months.

2. When travel is authorized or approved on an actual expense basis (refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 2, *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 authorizes the actual expense for lodging and/or meal(s). Meals will be itemized separately, i.e., breakfast, lunch and dinner. When an authorizing official limits reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) to 100 percent 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 expense report (refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*).

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 should be noted in the adjustment comment section or the remarks section. When approved, the expense report is locked. The traveler may submit supplemental expense reports for additional expenses incurred during a trip if the original expense report has already been paid. The expense report is not paid until the approving official reviews and approves the expense report (voucher) and required receipts.

5. Expense reports will be examined and approved by the approving official having knowledge of the facts involved in the travel. Final approval of properly prepared expense reports will be completed based on Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) guidelines to ensure payment within 30 calendar days. Approving officials will return erroneous or incomplete expense reports to travelers within 7 business days after the traveler signs/submits the report. 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.

#### C. Post Payment Expense Report Audit.

The VA Financial Services Center (FSC) will perform post-payment audits on a randomly-selected sample of electronically-routed expense reports and 100 percent of expense reports with monthly payments of \$2,500 and over. The Office of Business Oversight's Management Quality Assurance Service (MQAS), as part of the expense reviews it conducts on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) facilities, may perform judgmental reviews of expense vouchers for timeliness and appropriateness. Travelers or Approving Officials will be prepared to provide the necessary documentary evidence for up to 6 years 3 months to support the travel reimbursement when travelers fail to electronically attach receipts with their expense reports. Travelers may submit amended expense vouchers for underpayments.

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

Unless otherwise exempt from use, employees are required to use the Government-sponsored, contractor-issued Travel Charge Card in accordance with the FTR and VA policy. Refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*.

#### **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 31 U.S.C. Chapter 37, 3711-3720(E), Collection and Compromise<sup>1</sup>
- 010305 31 U.S.C. 3729, False Claims
- 010306 38 U.S.C. 7410, Additional Pay Authorities
- 010307 5 C.F.R. Part 550, Pay Administration
- 010308 5 C.F.R. Part 572, Travel and Transportation Expenses; New Appointees and Interviews
- 010309 5 C.F.R. Part 1315, Prompt Payment
- 010310 5 C.F.R. Part 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch
- 010311 31 C.F.R. Part 901, Standards for the Administrative Collection of Claims
- 010312 38 C.F.R. 1.914, Collection in Installments
- 010313 38 C.F.R. 1.980(c), Scope
- 010314 41 C.F.R. Chapters 301-304, Federal Travel Regulation
- 010315 OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Improving the Management of Government Charge Card Programs
- 010316 FedTraveler.com Tutorial
- 010317 VA's Forms Web Site
- 010318 Office of Financial Policy Publications Library

#### **0104 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

010401 The Assistant Secretary for Management/Chief Financial Officer (CFO) oversees all financial management activities relating to the Department's programs and operations, as required by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and [38 U.S.C. 309](#). 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

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<sup>1</sup> Includes the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, [Public Law 104-134](#).

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 Financial Policy (OFP) provides Department-wide financial policy and guidance. The Office of Financial Business Operations' Travel Policy staff develops, coordinates, issues, evaluates and reviews Departmental travel policies, systems and procedures for compliance with all financial laws and regulations.

010404 Approving officials will:

- A. Authorize travel for employees under their jurisdiction in advance of the travel.
- B. Determine if the travel is essential for the purpose of carrying out the mission of VA.
- C. Ensure all travel is authorized and performed consistent with the FTR, [41 C.F.R. 301-304](#), VA Travel Policy and any other Department-specific guidance (e.g., Travel Notices).
- D. Ensure adequate funds are available before authorizing travel.
- E. Ensure all travel is performed in the most economical and effective manner.
- F. Ensure VA's ETS is used to prepare, process, approve and route travel authorizations and vouchers for official TDY, including the requirement to use the ETS for making reservations.
- G. Examine expense vouchers to ensure the justification, supporting documentation and receipts are attached, travel expenses for which reimbursement is claimed was performed as authorized, and split-pay was used to pay for all authorized expenses made to the travel card.
- H. Ensure travel outside of a traveler's regular duty hours is minimal.
- I. Ensure travelers under their jurisdiction complete vendorizing forms for establishment in VA's ETS. The ETS is used to process travel payments electronically, file expense reports with electronically attached receipts, and comply with the travel card program guidelines.

010405 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, overnight hourly airport parking, taxi when complimentary shuttle is available).
- C. Ensure travel is authorized by the Approving Official prior to departure.
- D. Arrange travel using VA's ETS, including reservations for transportation, lodging and rental cars, unless an exception applies.
- E. Cancel transportation and lodging reservations timely.
- F. Claim and obtain, where applicable, exemptions of tax imposed on hotel accommodations in locations listed in the Federal Acquisition Service's [GSA SmartPay](#) site. 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 (i.e., denies confirmed reserved seat).
- H. Submit claim for reimbursement for expenses into ETS within 5 business days of return to the official station. Travelers in an extended travel status will submit expense vouchers every 30 calendar days. Local expense vouchers may be submitted monthly.
- I. Account for travel advances when filing the expense report. Under circumstances where 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. Refer to [5 C.F.R. Part 2635](#) for further explanation.
- K. Comply with VA's Travel Charge Card Program guidance in Volume XVI, Chapter 2.

## **0105 PROCEDURES**

This section of the chapter 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](#): Delegation of Authority.

[Appendix B](#): Purpose for Travel.

B. E-Gov Travel Service (ETS.)

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

C. No Cost Travel Authority.

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

D. Non-Federal Sponsored Travel

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

E. Local Travel.

Volume XIV, Chapter 7, *Local Travel*.

F. Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel.

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

010502 TRAVEL ADVANCES.

[Appendix G](#): Procedures for Collecting an Outstanding Travel Advance.

For procedures other than collecting travel advances, refer to 010204.

010503 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

[Appendix H](#): Receipt Requirements.

For procedures relating to the documentation and review of expenses claimed, refer to 010205B.

010504 USE OF THE TRAVEL CHARGE CARD.

Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*.

## 0106 DEFINITIONS

010601 Abode. The place where an individual resides (e.g., home, hotel, apartment).

010602 Alternate Preparer. An individual with the authority to prepare travel documents for other employees.

010603 Approving Official (AO). An employee with authority to approve or direct travel for official Government business by the agency head.

010604 Audit. A formal examination of an organization or individual's accounts or financial situation.

010605 Automated Teller Machine (ATM). An electronic device which allows cash advances from participating banks.

010606 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.

010607 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 does not think he or she owes the money.

010608 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.

010609 E-Gov Travel Service (ETS). 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.

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 relocation policy for all Title 5 Executive Agency employees. The Code of Federal Regulations is available at [www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr).

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 Hotel Receipt. A valid receipt will show the 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 not 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 (under 5 U.S.C. 5703) intermittently 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. A VA station may establish a local radius specific to their station based on counties or nearby cities. 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 virtual/mobile office.

010618 Lodgings-plus Per Diem System. The method of computing per diem allowances for official travel in which the per diem allowance for each travel day is

established on the basis of the actual amount the traveler pays for lodging, plus an allowance for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE), the total of which does not exceed the applicable maximum per diem rate for the location concerned.

010619 **Miscellaneous Expenses.** Other miscellaneous travel expenses are those expenses described in [41 C.F.R.](#) that 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.

010620 **Official Station.** The corporate limits of the city or town and any other established areas in which the employee's permanent work assignment is situated.

010621 **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.

010622 **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.

010623 **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.

010624 **Payment.** Funds paid for travel, subsistence and related expenses by check or similar instrument or payment in-kind.

010625 **Payment In-Kind.** Any goods, services or other benefits provided by a non-Federal source for travel, subsistence and related expenses in lieu of funds paid to VA by check or similar instrument for the same purpose.

010626 **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.

010627 **Receipt.** A valid receipt is a written acknowledgement that indicated the amount paid for goods or services. It will show the name of the traveler and the company providing the goods or services.

010628 **Relocation Travel.** Involves travel with the change of an employee's official station.

010629 **Rental Car Receipt.** A valid 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.

010630 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.

010631 Serious Illness or Injury. A grave or 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.

010632 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.

010633 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.

010634 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.

010635 Travel Advance. Prepayment of estimated travel expenses paid to an employee in the form of electronic funds transfer.

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 (Voucher). 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 Management Center (TMC). A common carrier travel firm under contract providing reservation, tickets and related travel management services for official travelers.

010640 Travel Management Service (TMS). A service for booking common carrier (e.g., air, rail and bus confirmations and seat assignments), lodging accommodations and car rental services; fulfilling reservations (i.e., ticketing); providing basic management information on those activities; and meeting other requirements, as specified in the FTR. A TMS may include a Travel Management Center (TMC), Commercial Ticket Office (CTO), an electronically available system, other commercial methods of arranging travel, or an in-house system.

010641 Traveler. An individual, as defined by the FTR, who is authorized to perform official Government travel.

010642 Temporary Duty (TDY) Location. A place away from an employee's official station, where the employee is authorized to travel.

010643 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 Directive 0636, E-Gov Travel Service Policy for Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel

010702 VA Directive 4003, Travel Reimbursement

010703 VA Handbook 0636, E-Gov Travel Service Procedures for Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel

010704 VA Handbook 4003, Travel Reimbursement Procedures

010705 OF Bulletin 09047E3.05, Use of E-Gov Travel Service Online Booking Engine

010706 OF Bulletin 09E1.07, FedTraveler.com Receipt Imaging Functionality

010707 OF Bulletin 09E1.04, No-Cost Travel

010708 OF Bulletin 09E1.02, Open Travel Authorizations

010709 OF Bulletin 03GC3.02, Authorization and Approval of Travel

010710 Travel Notice 06-02: Collection of Travel Advances

010711 Travel Notice 07-03: Purchasing Common Carrier (Air/Rail) Transportation - Contractor use of City Pair and Government Travel Management Center (TMC)

010712 Travel Notice 07-13: Lodging & Rental Car Reservations for Employees Without a Government Contractor-Issued Travel Charge Card

010713 Travel Notice 07-14: Reservations for Personal Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel

### **0108 QUESTIONS**


Questions concerning these financial policies and procedures should be directed as shown below:

VHA  
VBA  
All Others

VHA Accounting Policy (Outlook)  
VAVBAWAS/CO/FINREP (Outlook)  
Office of Financial Business Operations  
Charge Card Oversight & Travel Policy Service  
Travel Policy (Outlook)



**APPENDIX A: DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Current Delegations of Authority Relating to Temporary Duty Travel Related Requests for Department of Veterans Affairs Employees<sup>2</sup></b></p>							
Delegations	VA	VHA	VBA	NCA	BVA	Date of Delegation	Redelegation Allowed?
Premium-Class or First-Class Travel Accommodations	Assistant Secretary for Management					04/25/2003	No
Actual Expense Per diem in excess of 150% up to 300%	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Finance					10/08/2010	No
Actual Expense Per diem in excess of 150% up to 300%		Under Secretary for Health	Under Secretary for Benefits	Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs		09/15/2003	Yes <sup>3</sup>
Actual Expense Per diem in excess of 150% up to 300%					Chairman, Board of Veteran's Appeals	12/20/2005	No
Authority to Exempt Traveler or Payments from the Requirement to Use the Government Travel Card	Assistant Secretary for Management					10/24/2003	No
Delegation of Authority to Waive the Requirement for Travel Receipts for Security Reasons	Assistant Secretary for Management					09/15/2003	No

<sup>2</sup> Approval of Foreign Travel, although not a delegated issue, is listed in Vol. XIV, Chapter 6, *International Travel (Passports/Visas/Country Clearances)*.

<sup>3</sup> Re-delegation – Cannot be re-delegated to lower than an SES level position.



## Current Delegations of Authority Relating to Temporary Duty Travel Related Requests for Department of Veterans Affairs Employees<sup>2</sup>

Delegations	VA	VHA	VBA	NCA	BVA	Date of Delegation	Redelegation Allowed?
Delegation of Authority to Waive the Federal Travel Regulations within the Continental United States (associated with employee relocation to or from a remote or isolated location within CONUS)	Assistant Secretary for Management					02/08/2008	No
Approval of Foreign Travel	Assistant Secretary for Management	Under Secretary for Health	Under Secretary for Benefits	Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs			
Delegation of Authority to Approve Exemptions from the Mandatory Use of the Agency Travel Management System (TMS) or e-Travel System (ETS)	<b>Secretary of Veterans Affairs</b>						

**APPENDIX B: 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.

Purpose for Travel	Use When
<b>Employee Emergency</b>	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 (as defined FTR 300-3.1 or 301-30.2) 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 (Part 301-30), death of employee/immediate family member when performing official duties away from the official duty station or home of record (Part 70), medical attendant transportation (Part 30), assistance travel for an employee with special needs (Part 301-13), and travel for an employee who has been threatened and needs protection (Part 301-31).
<b>Mission (Operational)</b>	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.
<b>Special Agency Mission</b>	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: These agency-defined special missions may include 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>	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

	<p>oversee the conference or attendance with no formal role or as an exhibitor.</p>
<p><b>Training</b></p>	<p>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 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. Agencies have to distinguish between conference and training attendance and use the appropriate identifier (see Conference--Other Than Training above).</li> </ul> <p>Examples: Job required training, Internships, Inter Governmental Personnel Act and forums.</p>

## **APPENDIX C: 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 (i.e., \$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. 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 ETS for that episode of travel should 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 (i.e., 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 required for employee no-cost travel authorizations prepared and issued.

See next page for sample form.

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)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>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	
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 D: 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 E-Gov Travel Service (ETS) 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 ETS 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 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 ETS administrator will enter the traveler's vendor code into VA's ETS for the traveler as part of the travel document processing.
4. If a traveler changes the bank or financial institution designated for EFT travel reimbursement, the traveler will notify the local ETS administrator by completing the appropriate form.

### **C. Form**

To designate the financial institution for EFT reimbursement, the traveler will complete Standard Form 3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form.

## **APPENDIX E: PERSONAL/UNOFFICIAL TRAVEL COMBINED WITH OFFICIAL TRAVEL**

### **PROCEDURES FOR USING ETS WHEN PERSONAL TRAVEL IS COMBINED 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 should 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. ETS 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.
6. Make other travel arrangements using commercial means as desired for personal travel only. Save the invoice and fax it into your expense report 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.

#### **B. Creating an Expense Report**




1. Create an expense report 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 expense report. This worksheet will be reviewed as the cost comparison by your approving official.
3. Edit the expense report 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 fax it into the receipts section. 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 expense report to begin the routing process.

## APPENDIX F: NON-FEDERAL SPONSORED TRAVEL

### PROCEDURES FOR CREATING A NON-FEDERAL SPONSORED TRAVEL AUTHORITY IN E-GOV TRAVEL SERVICE (ETS)

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 travel authorization in ETS 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 G: 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 should 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 Volume XII, *Debt Management*.<sup>4</sup>

Once an outstanding, unliquidated travel advance has been confirmed, the 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 should be returned immediately, if not used for that purpose. 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 should be recouped at once, which should be within two pay periods or 30 days. If collection is not accomplished within 30 days, interest and other late payment charges should be assessed. For additional information, again refer to chapters in Volume XII, *Debt Management*.<sup>5</sup> 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 should only be used when it is determined that collection in one lump sum would create an undue financial hardship and should be set up to recoup the advance as soon as possible.

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<sup>4</sup> For additional information on authorized uses of salary offset, refer to Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XII, Chapter 1D, *Salary Offset for Federal Employees Indebted to U.S.*

<sup>5</sup> For additional information on authorized uses of salary offset, refer to Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XII, Chapter 1A, *Interest, Administrative Costs & Penalty Charges*.

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 Volume 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 H: RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS

### RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS

A. Receipts will be faxed into the ETS. Where it is impracticable to furnish receipts, the failure to do so will be fully explained on the expense voucher. Mere inconvenience in the matter of taking receipts will not be considered.

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

1. Baggage – a receipt is required for all baggage expenses associated with the movement of Government and/or personal property of the traveler for official travel.

- Authorized excess (exceeding weight, size or number of pieces carried free by the carrier).
- 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.

2. Common carrier transportation – ticketed itineraries for the use of commercial air, rail or bus service.

3. Commercial communication 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.

Note: When 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.

4. 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.

5. 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 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.
6. Hire of special conveyance, such as livery, boat, automobile – receipt will show the service hired and rendered, rate of compensation by day (hour or other unit) and subsistence, if included in the cost.
7. Lodging – to support all lodging costs for which an allowance is claimed under the lodging-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. 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 ETS under transportation/rental car. Other authorized expenses (i.e., gasoline and/or authorized insurance for foreign TDY) will be included as a separate miscellaneous expense.
9. Services and processing fees (transaction fees) – Includes clerical assistance, computers, printers, fax machines, scanners, room rental, guides, interpreters, packers, and drivers of vehicles, and for arranging official transportation, rental car and lodging accommodations through the ETS and TMC.
10. Shipments of government property by freight or express – when property needed by the traveler exceeds the baggage allowance (i.e., 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.
- C. Receipts are required for all other travel expenses only when the amount is in excess of \$75 or when required by the approving official.