Domestic and International Travel Out-of-State Policy

Chapter 5: Finance

Policy Number: PL506.02
Effective Date: 6/18/2025
Responsible Manager: Financial Management Director Martina Cameron
Approval: Chief Operating Officer Mel Gresczyk

Policy Statement

Travel budget and plans

The Commissioner's Office establishes an annual travel budget based on agency needs. Division leadership prioritizes their out-of-state travel within annual targets set by the Commissioner's Office.

Agency division directors establish annual travel plans for their division's programs and track travel to ensure compliance with this policy. The chief financial officer must approve in advance any exceptions to division travel plans.

Criteria for approving requests

Agency personnel who review out-of-state business travel requests will only approve those trips that are essential for the efficient conduct of department business.

Only one person per division will travel to the same conference or meeting unless the division director submits, and the Commissioner's Office approves, a justification to authorize two or more persons on any one trip.

Travel arrangements

Employees make the lowest cost reservation possible. However, employees may make other arrangements if this is not possible due to time of flights, layover, change of work plans, or connecting flights. The state has a master contract to provide travel management services to state employees. Employees must use this contract to book air travel.

Employees must book lodging directly with the lodging facility. When booking, employees must request the government rate if available. Employees may not use third party booking websites (Expedia, for example) or private property rental platforms (Airbnb and VRBO, for example).

Rewards and incentives prohibited

When checking out of a lodging facility, the employee must inspect the receipt. If the receipt lists rewards, the employee must request removal of the rewards and obtain a revised receipt with no rewards.

By submitting the Authorization for Out-of-State Travel Form into the RAISE system, employees certify they will not accept any travel incentives, compensation, or rewards, including frequent flyer miles, offered in connection with department-related travel as per Minnesota Statutes Section 15.435, Airline Travel Credit, and Minnesota Statutes Section 43A.38, Subd. 2, Code of Ethics for Employees in the Executive Branch.

Non-business travel prohibited

This policy prohibits booking non-business travel destinations for state employees while on authorized state business. Example of prohibited non-business travel: MDH employee travels from Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport to Orlando, Florida for a business conference. After the conference, the employee wishes to travel from Orlando, Florida to Dallas, Texas for personal reasons. In this example, this policy prohibits MDH from covering the cost of the flight from Orlando, FL to Dallas, TX, and from paying for a return flight from Dallas, TX to Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport.

Travel expense reimbursement

Expense reimbursement is subject to the employee's relevant collective bargaining agreement for meals, mileage, and other expenses.

When an organization outside of state government agrees to pay for out of state travel for a MDH employee, MDH sends an invoice to the outside agency for the MDH employee's expenses. MDH does not send an invoice if the outside organization provides a written waiver stating it is unwilling to or cannot be invoiced. In this case the employee works directly with the outside organization for payment and/or reimbursement of travel expenses.

Use of state vehicles prohibited

This policy prohibits the use of state vehicles for travel outside of Minnesota. Travel to border communities is treated as in-state travel when the destination is contiguous to the nearest Minnesota town, city, community (for example, Fargo-Moorhead, East Grand Forks-West Grand Forks). Travel into Canada from any Minnesota destination is international travel.

International travel

Employees must use the State of Minnesota Request for Approval of Special Expenses Form to request approval for international travel.

Applicability

This policy applies to all MDH employees seeking approval for domestic and international out-of-state travel, MDH employees responsible for approving requests for such travel, and all MDH employees involved in the process.

Rationale

- To support compliance with Minnesota Statutes Section 15.435, Airline Travel Credit.
- To support compliance with Minnesota Statutes Section 43A.38, Subd. 2, Code of Ethics For Employees in the Executive Branch.

Definitions

In-state travel. Travel to any community within the state of Minnesota. In-state travel also extends to border communities in neighboring states when the destination is contiguous to the nearest Minnesota town, city, or community. Examples include Fargo-Moorhead and East Grand Forks-West Grand Forks.

International travel. Includes travel into Canada or any other country in the world from any Minnesota destination.

Out-of-state travel. Travel to any state within the United States of America outside of the in-state travel defined regions.

RAISE. Request for approval to incur special expense. This is the system that is used for submitting RAISE or Special Expense requests.

Roles and Responsibilities

Commissioner's Office

1. Establish and communicate an annual travel budget for the agency.
2. Review justifications and, as appropriate, authorize travel for more than one person on the same trip.
3. Approve travel that is essential for the efficient conduct of department business.

Division directors

1. Establish annual travel plans for division programs.
2. Track travel to ensure compliance with this policy.
3. As necessary, prepare and submit justifications for authorizing more than one person to travel on the same trip.

Chief financial officer

1. As appropriate, provide advance approval for any exceptions to division travel plans.

Employees

1. Request approval for travel according to Domestic and International Travel Out-of-State Procedure.
2. Make travel arrangements in compliance with this policy.

Related Information

- Minnesota Statutes Section 43.A.38, Subd 2, Code of Ethics For Employees in the Executive Branch
- Minnesota Statutes Section 15.435, Airline Travel Credit.
- State of Minnesota Request for Approval of Special Expenses
- Domestic and International Travel Out-of-State Procedure

History

- Supersedes PR506.01