

Policy for Travel Reimbursement

Traveler During the Trip

The traveler is responsible for obtaining all proper documentation for each expense. Typically, this documentation will be a receipt that identifies the expense and reflects proof of payment of the expense. The traveler is also responsible for documenting the business purpose or justification for each expense. This helps to document why the expense is eligible for reimbursement and should not be considered as taxable income.

Compliance Issues

The traveler should request reimbursement within 10 business days of the trip and must request reimbursement no later than 120 days after date of the expenditure or the end of the University's fiscal year (June 30th), whichever is sooner. Late submissions may only be reimbursed with the approval of the department. Supporting documentation must be provided in order to describe the circumstances leading to the late submission in order to evaluate whether it is a taxable event. If the circumstances described would not have prevented the traveler from submitting within the proper timeframe (120 days), they are considered taxable income. Expense reimbursements requested more than one year from the date of expenditure are always considered taxable income to the traveler.

Business Purpose - All expenses must be for a valid business purpose that is necessary and reasonable in order to conduct University business. A business purpose must be documented for all expenditures for which a traveler is requesting reimbursement.

Business purpose must be specific. "Travel to Boston, MA to speak at Accounts Payable Network conference" is an appropriately documented business purpose. "Travel to Boston for conference" is not. The business purpose of an expense may be obvious to the traveler, but not to a third-party reviewer.

Receipt – Obtain a receipt for everything. If the traveler is unable to obtain an original receipt that contains all the required information, documentation should be submitted to demonstrate as many of the required items as possible. A copy of the traveler's credit or debit card statement identifying the date, location and amount of the expense, or a rental agreement, may be submitted along with a description of the purchase, identifying the amount of any expenses to be segregated (i.e. alcohol).

Air Travel - Economy/coach class airline tickets should be purchased aboard a regularly scheduled commercial carrier. While some restrictions or penalties may apply, reservations made 14 days or more in advance of the trip secure the lowest fares. The University expects that the majority of air travel will be at the lowest available fare. In addition, the majority of University research grants only allow for travel in coach or

economy class. Travelers may travel in business class as an exception (or first class if business class service is not offered on the flight) only if:

- the flight has a scheduled in air flying time in excess of five hours.
- a documented medical condition requires it.

Lodging - The cost of a hotel stay in the US should not exceed \$350 per night (excluding taxes). International travelers should obtain room rates that do not exceed \$400 per night (US dollars, excluding taxes).

Meals - Except under rare circumstances, these meals should not exceed the following thresholds, excluding tips and tax:

- Up to \$25 for breakfast,
- Up to \$35 for lunch,
- Up to \$50 for dinner

*Additional compliance issues including non-reimbursable expenses can be found on the Accounts Payable website http://www.finance.columbia.edu/procurement/ap/travel-business_expenses/travel/travel.html

Policy for Business Reimbursement

Compliance Issues

Expense reimbursements should be submitted to the department as frequent as is necessary (bi-monthly, monthly). Reimbursement requests must be submitted no later than 120 days after the date of the expense, or the end of the fiscal year (June 30), whichever is sooner.

Meals - Business meetings involving only University personnel and students should not exceed the following thresholds, excluding tips and tax:

- Up to \$25 for breakfast,
- Up to \$35 for lunch,
- Up to \$50 for dinner

Business meal expenditures that are hosted by and paid for by a CU employee and include guests, business colleagues, donors, and prospective employees should not exceed \$100 per person, excluding tips and tax.

*Additional compliance issues including special circumstance expenses can be found on the Accounts Payable website http://www.finance.columbia.edu/procurement/ap/travel-business_expenses/business/business.html

Procedure for Travel and Business Reimbursement

Travel & Business Expense Excel Worksheet

You will find the worksheet online at

<http://www.finance.columbia.edu/procurement/ap/resources/TBExpReportWorkbook.xls>

Please note the *Expense Report Extra Page* for extra line items for large Business or Travel expense reports.

Please follow the instruction on the first sheet of the Workbook. You may leave the “Account number----- Subcode” section on the lower left hand corner blank.

The department number is 170. Contact person is Jaya Mohanty and her phone number is 212-854-1480

Foreign travel (currency conversion)

Use Oanda (<http://www.oanda.com/convert/fxdaily>) to obtain conversions for expense incurred in a foreign currency. Enter the amount and date of the expense. Choose your currencies. Be sure to print out a copy of the conversion and enter the USD amount on your worksheet.

Package the Expense Report

Include a signed and completed copy of your worksheet along with all the receipts (and corresponding currency conversion pages) correctly labeled with their corresponding expense number on the worksheet. The receipts should be taped to a standard 8.5x11 paper.