

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION</b> FINA Administration and Finance		<b>POLICY NUMBER</b> FINA 1.00
<b>POLICY TITLE</b> Travel – Employees and Students		
<b>SCOPE OF POLICY</b> USC System		<b>DATE OF REVISION</b> December 17, 2019
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b> Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer		<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</b> University Finance - Controller’s Office

**PURPOSE**

The University of South Carolina will ensure compliance with all university travel guidelines and procedures as governed by Federal and State travel regulations as it pertains to the reimbursement of employee and student travel expenditures.

**DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**Electronic Approval** — an electronic approval of a travel expense report request or of other documentation is accepted if one of the following is met: submission of travel expenses through the University’s PeopleSoft Travel and Expense Module shall constitute as a true signature by the traveler based on the authentication process of the application itself, electronic fax/scanned copy of a signed document or via an email from the approver directly from their university email address.

**Reasonable Expense** — An expense that is ordinary and reflects a prudent decision to incur the expense on behalf of University business. Not extreme or excessive.

**Short-term rental or “home sharing”** — residential property that is rented to a visitor for fewer than 30 days through a centralized online platform whereby the rental is advertised, and rental payments are securely processed. Examples include but not limited to *Airbnb, VRBO, Roomorama, HomeAway, et al*

**Travel** — as described in this policy, is travel more than 10 miles from an employee’s primary office at the University for the purpose of conducting business of the University, attending professional meetings, special demonstration meetings and other related meetings. Expenses related to the cost of relocating/moving are not classified as travel per this policy.

**Transportation network company or “ridesharing”** — an organization, including but not limited to, a corporation, limited liability company, partnership, sole proprietor, or any other entity, operating in or out of the United States that provides prearranged transportation services for compensation using an online- enabled or mobile application or platform to connect passengers with drivers using a personal vehicle. Simply, Ridesharing is a service that arranges one-time shared rides on very short notice, usually arranged through a smartphone app. Examples include but not limited to *Uber, Lyft, Sidecar, et al*

## POLICY STATEMENT

### I. Policy

The University of South Carolina will ensure compliance with all university travel guidelines and procedures as governed by Federal and State travel regulations as it pertains to the reimbursement of employee and student travel expenditures. This policy is applicable to all travel, regardless of the source of funds used for reimbursement. All travel expenses should be reasonable and reflect a prudent decision to incur the expense on behalf of the university.

- A. Travel (more than 10 miles from the traveler's official headquarters) is deemed to be official travel of the university for the purpose of conducting business of the university, to include but not limited to, attending professional meetings, special demonstration meetings and other related meetings. Expenses related to the cost of relocating/moving are not classified as travel and should follow university policy FINA 1.08 Relocation Expenses. Students traveling as official representatives of the university and travel by sanctioned student organizations will be subject to the same policies and procedures as other university travelers except where noted in policy and procedures.
- B. A traveler (employee or student) on official business is expected to exercise discretion when making travel arrangements and expenditures. As an agency of State, Federal, and Private grant funds, each employee should use the following guidance when traveling:
  1. Avoid excess costs, circuitous routes, delays or luxury accommodations unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of an assignment.
  2. Travel by commercial airlines must be in coach or tourist class except where emergencies require an exception. Exceptions for first class airfare will be paid and/or reimbursed from funds other than operating funds (A Funds).
  3. Automobile transportation may be used when air and ground transportation cannot be arranged satisfactorily, or to reduce expenses when two or more university employees are traveling together.
  4. Transportation to and from business destinations should be by the most economical method. In calculating the most economical method, the travel time, and any resulting extra funds used for meals and lodging costs should be considered in addition to transportation costs
  5. Travelers using Federal grant funds are required to fly on U.S. flag air carriers as stated in the Fly America Act. Contact Grants and Fund Management for details of Federal regulations or read the regulations at <https://www.tvlon.com/resources/FlyAct.html>.

6. A Travel Authorization (TA) must be completed before travel occurs in the following circumstances:
  - a. Individual travel expenses expected to be \$5,000 or greater
  - b. All Foreign Travel. To comply with state reporting requirements, a separate TA must be prepared for each employee traveling. For Student Travel, a group TA is acceptable.
  - c. All Travel Advances
  - d. Airline tickets issued by University approved travel agencies and charged against a Travel Authorization.

Individual departmental approval must be obtained for all other travel prior to official travel in accord with departmental approval procedures.

- C. Reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses of individuals will vary depending upon the circumstances and conditions, including the extent of benefit expected to accrue to the individual and the university. Each administrator shall determine the appropriateness of such travel and the extent to which the university is to participate in defraying travel and subsistence expenses.

## **Ground Transportation**

### **Rental Cars**

Charges for automobile rental are allowed when it is more economical than alternative methods of transportation or is the only practical means of transportation. Automobiles now rented by the University for 30 days or fewer can no longer be acquired through State Fleet and must be rented through private car rental companies on state contract. For further information regarding vehicle rentals contact Vehicle Management.

University employees should be aware that the State contract provides for unlimited mileage, liability, and comprehensive and collision protection.

If it is necessary to rent an automobile while in travel status outside the United States, it is recommended the collision damage waiver insurance be obtained. The charge and the applicable tax will be included on the automobile rental statement submitted with the request for reimbursement.

### **Personal Cars**

University employees may use their personal automobile for official travel provided the University will not incur added expenses above that of other forms of transportation available (or if determined to be a reasonable alternative for other reasons by the travel approver for travel reimbursement). When a personal automobile is used for business travel, the traveler will be reimbursed up to the current IRS authorized mileage rate for miles incurred.

Mileage between an employee's home and his/her place of employment is not subject to reimbursement. However, when an employee leaves on a business trip directly from his/her home, and does not go by the employee's headquarters, the employee shall be eligible for reimbursement for actual mileage beginning at his/her residence.

No reimbursement will be made for fines related to moving or non-moving violations.

### **Ridesharing**

Travelers may utilize such services, but receipts are still required to be reimbursed per Receipts section below. Surcharges and fees may be reimbursable if the total cost is comparable to other ground transportation options. Travelers need to be aware that there is no guarantee of safety when using such service.

### **Car Allowance and Courtesy Car**

University employees that are provided a car allowance or a courtesy car as a part of their employment, will be reimbursed the IRS standard mileage rate less depreciation.

### **Meals**

While on official travel within and outside the State of South Carolina, employees will be reimbursed for meals based on rates in the table below. Meal per diem is only reimbursable when travel includes an overnight stay. Out of State Travel is defined as travel outside of South Carolina but within the continental US, Alaska, Hawaii, Canada or Puerto Rico.

An employee must be in travel status as defined by State regulations (more than 10 miles from their official headquarters) to be eligible for reimbursement of meals. Eligibility for reimbursement of specific meals on the day of departure or day of return depends on the specific time of departure or return as detailed in the associated procedures. If registration fees include any meals, the employee is not eligible for reimbursement for those meals.

For International Meals, if receipts are not provided, only the maximum daily rate established by the Federal Government for meals and incidentals can be claimed. When claiming reimbursement for actual expenses of meals that exceeds the daily rate, receipts are required.

## **Lodging**

Lodging arrangements and deposits are the responsibility of the traveler and will be reimbursed as part of the lodging expenses upon completion of the trip. Actual lodging expenses as reflected on the receipt will be reimbursed up to a maximum base of \$350 per day. Moderately priced accommodations should be selected when a choice is available. Effective with fiscal year 2020-2021, the maximum base per day will be adjusted annually on July 1st by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics All Urban Consumer Price Index (CPI). The adjusted rate will be updated and detailed in the procedures annually. Exceptions may be granted as necessary by the Chief Financial Officer.

No reimbursement will be made for overnight lodging within 50 miles of the employee's official headquarters or residence. Expenses for shared lodging will only be reimbursed to one employee. If the room is shared with someone other than a University employee, only the single room rate will be reimbursable.

Baggage handling charges are reimbursable as detailed in the procedures.

## **Home Sharing**

Travelers may use such services, but a detailed receipt is still required for reimbursement, so travelers are encouraged to check that such receipts are available before booking through these services.

D. All travel reimbursements submitted are required to have the signature of the traveler certifying the amounts are true and correct and conform to Federal, State and University laws, rules, guidelines and procedures. All signatures must be original or in an approved electronic format (faxed or electronic mail). An exception to the requirements above is the submission of travel expenses through the University's PeopleSoft Travel and Expense Module shall constitute as a true signature by the traveler based on the authentication process of the application itself. Each traveler must submit their own reimbursement with signatures. The employee's supervisor must approve the reimbursement as detailed in the procedures. The supervisor's approval is asserting that they are aware of the employee's travel and the expenditures appear to be reasonable.

E. This policy does not apply to reimbursement of travel for non-university employees.

## **II. Procedures**

The procedure for this policy provides details on the administration and management of travel for the university. The procedure is located at [http://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/controller/policies\\_and\\_procedures/index.php](http://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/controller/policies_and_procedures/index.php)

**RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES**

- FINA 1.08
- FINA 2.00
- FINA 2.12
- FINA 2.15

**HISTORY OF REVISIONS**

<b>DATE OF REVISION</b>	<b>REASON FOR REVISION</b>
October 19, 2017	Policy revised due to change requested by Audit and Advisory Services regarding individual travel reimbursements and to comply with changes on deferral regulations.
May 17, 2018	Policy revisions in order to add additional language about reasonable expenses as noted in Section I, to revise Travel Authorization section to comply with the implementation of Travel and Expense module in PeopleSoft and to add information or means of travel, meals and lodging.
December 17, 2019	Policy revisions in order to update lodging daily base rate to \$350 per day and to provide direction on annual escalation adjustment by the Consumer Price Index.

**APPENDICES**