

TRAVEL POLICY- Approved by Laurens County Council 11 13 18

PURPOSE:

This policy has been developed under the authority of Laurens County Council and in accordance with Sec. 4-9-30(7) of the South Carolina Code. It is intended to provide guidance and procedures regarding Laurens County travel expenditures.

TRAVEL APPROVAL:

All Laurens County employee travel and related expenditures must be approved by a Department Head or the County Administrator prior to travel in order to determine the business need, requirement or benefit to the County.

All in state travel must be approved by the respective department heads for their employees in advance of travel. All out of state and all travel by department heads must be approved by the County Administrator in advance of travel.

Approval must be documented by signature on the Travel Voucher. Verbal approval, email approval or any other method of approval is not sufficient; the signature of the department head or the County Administrator must be on the form. This requirement of approval is necessary on all travel even if funded by grants.

Elected Officials, including County Council members, may sign their own travel vouchers. However, the required forms and documentation as detailed in this policy are still required.

REQUIRED FORMS

The “Laurens County Pre-Travel Voucher” form will be used for all employee or elected official travel. An electronic form is available by contacting Accounts Payable in the Finance Department. All expenses related to travel must be included on this form including any that will be paid for using a Purchasing Card. Meal reimbursement requests made after travel will be made on the “Laurens County Post-Travel Voucher” form.

PROCEDURES

A completed travel voucher, signed by the traveler, may be completed electronically then scanned along with documentation and emailed to the department head or the County

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Administrator for approval/signature. The department head or County Administrator will review to ensure that there is a valid business reason for the travel and that all documentation is present, and then will forward the approved form and supporting documents to Accounts Payable. Items which require the County Administrator approval may be emailed or sent interoffice, along with supporting documentation to the County Administrator for facilitation of signature.

Supporting documentation of the training course or reason for travel must be attached to the travel form and the form must be approved in advance of travel. An example of supporting documentation includes the conference agenda. The supporting documentation must show the location and dates of the event as well as whether any meals will be provided.

If several employees are traveling together a separate travel voucher must be completed for each employee traveling. **If carpooling only one employee will receive fuel reimbursement. Use of a County Vehicle is encouraged instead of use of a private vehicle.**

Travel Vouchers received by Accounts Payable without proper approvals or documentation will not be processed and will be returned to the employee to obtain the proper signatures or support. It will be the employee's responsibility to ensure that the approvals are obtained prior to travel.

Travel Vouchers not approved in advance of travel will be rejected and the expenditures will not be reimbursed.

MEALS/PER DIEM

The County will pay per diem for business travel. The County will only pay the meal per diem expenditures for business travel which requires an overnight stay. According to the IRS, same day travel or travel that does not require an overnight stay could be includable as taxable wages to the employee. Therefore the County will not be able to pay meal reimbursements for day trips.

An overnight stay would be allowable if the destination is over 70 miles from the employee's Laurens County Office location AND the course or function is two or more days in duration. If the course or function is not two or more days in duration but is at least 8 hours in duration, the destination must be over 90 miles from the employee's Laurens County office location in order to qualify for per diem. When there are multiple routes to a location, the employee should use the shortest route to calculate mileage.

The County will only pay the per diem for meals up to the rates listed below. The number of

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meals must be approved ahead of time on the Pre-Travel Voucher. After travel, the employee must turn in an approved Post-Travel voucher **requesting the per diem**.

Employees will NOT be reimbursed for expenditures exceeding the allowable rates below. The maximum amounts that are allowable under the County's travel policy for overnight travel are shown in the tables below.

When departing on an overnight trip, your departure time must be at or before the following, in order to qualify for the meal:

Meal:	Maximum reimbursement	Leave at or before:
Breakfast	\$7.00	6:00 a.m.
Lunch	\$9.00	12:00 Noon
Dinner	\$18.00	6:00 p.m.

When returning from an overnight trip, your return time must be at or **after** the following, in order to qualify for the meal:

Meal:	Maximum reimbursement	Return at or after:
Breakfast	\$7.00	7:00 a.m.
Lunch	\$9.00	1:00 p.m.
Dinner	\$18.00	7:00 p.m.

There will not be a per diem paid for any meals which are provided by the course or function sponsor. If the hotel provides breakfast with the cost of the room, **the per diem will not be paid for that meal.**

MILEAGE:

The County will pay the standard IRS mileage rate per mile for any authorized travel for County business. Please refer to the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Standard-Mileage-Rates> for the most current IRS business mileage rate, or contact Accounts Payable in the Treasurer's Department to obtain the current rate.

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Overnight stay requirements do not apply to mileage reimbursements. Mileage should be requested in advance on the Laurens County Pre-Travel Voucher if possible. If this is not possible, the employee should include an estimate for approval and then turn in approved documentation after travel with a copy of the Pre-Travel Voucher. Support for the number of miles traveled should be attached. Examples include a Google Maps printout documenting travel miles. If multiple routes are available to the destination, the shortest distance should be used for reimbursement purposes.

Origination address is the shorter distance of:

- The Laurens County office where the employee normally works or
- The distance from the employee home to the travel destination

In lieu of a mileage advance or reimbursement, County employees are encouraged to use a County fleet vehicle when possible. All employees driving County vehicles must have taken the driver safety course given by the County risk manager. Employees may contact the County vehicle manager to obtain a fleet vehicle for their travel.

When two or more employees are traveling to the same destination a County Fleet vehicle should be used for the traveling group when possible and/or carpooling should be utilized.

Employees who are issued a County vehicle must drive that vehicle for any in town or out of town business travel and will not be reimbursed for mileage for any travel.

HOTEL EXPENSES:

Hotel expenses may be charged on a Laurens County purchasing card. However, the hotel expenses must be approved on the completed travel voucher before the hotel expense is reserved or paid for. Please note on the travel voucher the amount that will be charged on the purchasing card.

The County will pay for hotel expenses only if an overnight stay is required for County business or training purposes. An overnight stay would be allowable if the destination is over 70 miles from the employee's Laurens County office location AND the course or function the employee is attending is two or more days in duration. If the course or function is not two or more days in duration but is at least 8 hours in duration, the destination must be over 90 miles from the employee's Laurens County office location in order to qualify for a hotel stay. On a multi-day function the County will not pay for a hotel stay on the last day of the conference unless the destination is over 150 miles from the employees Laurens County office location AND the course or events end after four p.m. The County will pay for hotel

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stays only for the period required for the business travel.

The County encourages that the employee choose to stay at the host hotel for conferences and events when possible and cost effective.

Employees who wish to stay in a hotel in advance of a conference or after a conference has adjourned must provide supporting documentation of the business purpose.

Employees may not charge additional nights on a County purchasing card and then reimburse the County. Additional nights must be charged to the employee's personal credit card.

The County will pay for internet costs while at a hotel in order to allow employees to send work related emails while traveling. If the hotel provides breakfast with the cost of the room, per diem is not allowed for that meal.

The County will only pay for one standard room rate per employee per night. The County will not pay above the standard room rate for any of the following types of items related to hotel stays: **telephone, local or long distance calls, suite rooms, laundry services, any type of television or movies, extra pillows, roll-out cots, sofa beds, room service or any type of food, coffee or water, valet parking, or extra for any type of room view.**

Exceptions to this policy may be approved on a case-by-case basis by the County Administrator.