Meals and Lodging

POLICY
The University reimburses approved actual lodging expenses incurred while on travel status and pays a subsistence allowance to the University traveler.

Employees who expect to be in travel status at least once a year are encouraged to obtain and use University travel charge cards (see BPPM 95.03).

Maximum Reimbursement
Reimbursement may not exceed the applicable maximum rates. See BPPM 95.19 for maximum meal and lodging rates. See Requests to Exceed Maximum Lodging Rates.

For attendance at seminars or professional meetings reimbursement may be at less than the maximum rates if the lower rate is acceptable to the traveler. The limitation must be clearly shown on the Travel Authority form and initialed or signed by the traveler (see BPPM 95.05).

High Cost Areas
Certain U.S. and foreign cities and areas have been designated as high cost areas. Rates for continental and noncontinental USA and foreign areas change frequently and are available from the following web sites:

- Continental USA: U.S. General Services Administration Domestic Per Diem Rates website
- Noncontinental USA and Foreign: U.S. Department of State Foreign Per Diem Rates website

Extra Field Time
An administrator may authorize additional food and lodging expenditures for extra field time at the destination if it is demonstrated that a direct saving will result. The calculation of the savings must include a comparison of commercial transportation costs; food and lodging expenses; and when applicable, the salary and fringe benefit costs of involved employees. Such comparisons are to be documented and submitted with the employee's Travel Authority. (SAAM 10.20.40.e)

Temporary Duty Station
After a traveling employee has spent 90 days at a temporary duty station, the administrator reviews the assignment in order to determine whether the employee's permanent official duty station should be changed. (SAAM 10.10.30.c) If the administrator determines that it is more economical to leave the employee in travel status, the administrator prepares a written justification and sends it to the Executive Director of Business Services/Controller for approval.
Meals and Lodging

TRAVEL STATUS
Travel status begins at the time the traveler leaves his or her official station or official residence (whichever is closer to the travel destination). See BPPM 95.01 for definitions of official station and official residence.

MEALS
A traveler is eligible to receive subsistence allowance or reimbursement if he or she is in legitimate travel status at the traveler's normal meal time and the provisions of the Three-Hour Rule are met.

Three-Hour Rule
Reimbursement for subsistence is provided if the traveler is in travel status for the traveler's entire regularly scheduled working hours plus an additional three hours. See exceptions below.

NOTE: The traveler may not stop for a meal just to meet the requirements of the Three-Hour Rule.

See tax requirements under Meal Rates/Reimbursement below.

Meals at Official Station
Reimbursement for meal expenses incurred at the traveler's official station or official residence is prohibited (SAAM 10.40.40) except as follows:

Official Meetings
The cost for meals associated with certain official meetings or training sessions may be supported by general operating funds, without regard to travel status or the Three-Hour Rule, if the conditions and procedures in BPPM 70.31 are followed.

Weekend Meals
Expenses for weekend meals, which are associated with state business, are usually reimbursable if the employee's normal working hours do not include the weekend.

Emergencies
In emergency situations when the President determines that employees performing critical University functions must remain at their workstations.

Employee in Leadership Role
When an employee, acting in a custodial or leadership role, must, as part of his or her official duties, dine with students or other University clients, e.g., coaches dining with student athletes.

Meal Rates/Reimbursement
Rates
The traveler receives a set amount for each travel meal. The set meal amount is intended to repay the traveler for the basic costs of the meal including any applicable sales tax and any tip or gratuity. Meal rates vary by location (see BPPM 95.19).
### Meals and Lodging

**Actual Costs**

Departments may choose to reimburse travelers for the actual costs of meals instead of applying the meal rates. Actual meal reimbursement may not exceed approved meal rates. (SAAM 10.40.20.b) Under Travel Details on the Travel Expense Voucher (TEV) the department notes that actual cost is the basis for reimbursement.

**IRS Tax**

The Internal Revenue Service considers meals purchased during travel not involving an overnight stay and reimbursed under the Three-Hour Rule (see above) to be taxable fringe benefits. As such, the University must make appropriate deductions before paying the traveler.

NOTE: Meals purchased during an overnight trip or with business meetings (see also BPPM 70.31) are not taxable.

**Travel Services**

The taxable meal costs are reported to Travel Services on a TEV (see BPPM 95.20). Travel Services reimburses all allowable reported expenses except costs for taxable meals. Travel Services forwards the taxable meal cost information to Payroll Services.

**Payroll Services**

Payroll Services makes deductions and processes such meal reimbursements with the employee’s regular paycheck. These meal reimbursements are recorded on the PEAR (see BPPM 55.22) as earnings types MLS and FLS.

**Payment of Conference-Related Meal Costs**

When identifiable costs of meals are included in the lodging rate or registration fee of a meeting, conference, convention, or formal training session, the University pays meal costs not to exceed the designated meal allowances for the location. The University does not separately reimburse the traveler for the included meals. If the included meal costs are not specifically identified, the University does not separately reimburse the traveler for the included meals. (SAAM 10.40.40.c)

See also BPPM 70.31 and Food and Lodging in BPPM 95.20.

**Alcoholic Beverages**

Reimbursement for a state employee's alcoholic beverage expense from accounts not supported by discretionary funds is prohibited. See BPPM 70.33 for reimbursement of entertainment expenses from discretionary accounts.
Meals and Lodging

Furnished Meals
A traveler does not receive reimbursement for furnished meals. *(SAAM 10.40.40.b)*

**EXCEPTIONS:** Departments are not required to reduce or eliminate subsistence payments due to meals served on airlines. The daily meal rates for the day's destination may be applied.

Likewise, departments are not required to reduce or eliminate subsistence payments for *continental breakfasts* included in the lodging rate or in registration fees of meetings, conferences, or conventions. *(SAAM 10.40.20.d)*

**LODGING**
Travelers are reimbursed at basic commercial lodging rates not to exceed the maximum lodging rates listed in *BPPM 95.19* and the federal web rate sites.

**Travel Charge Card**
The preferred method for purchasing lodging accommodations while on official state business is through the use of the state-authorized corporate state travel card for individual employees. (At WSU the corporate card is referred to as the *University travel charge card*). See *BPPM 95.03*.

**Personal Resources**
Travelers may use personal financial resources to purchase lodging accommodations. *(SAAM 10.30.60.a)*

**Tax Exemptions**
When obtaining lodging, travelers are encouraged to request all available tax exemptions offered to governmental travelers *(SAAM 10.30.60.b)*. Refer to the following federal web site for more information:

www.gsa.gov

Select *Plan and Book* under the *Travel* tab, then
Select *Travel Policy*; then
Select *State Tax Rates and Exemption Info*.

**Taxes**
*Continental USA* maximum lodging rates do not include taxes. Taxes paid on lodging may be reimbursed even though the taxes raise the total cost of lodging to an amount that exceeds the maximum listed lodging rate. EXAMPLE: If the actual amount paid for the room is $70 and the maximum lodging rate is $70 and the taxes are $8, enter $78 under room rate on the TEV.

Taxes are included in lodging rates for *noncontinental and foreign* locations.
### Meals and Lodging

#### Commercial Facilities
WSU does not reimburse lodging expenses unless the traveler uses a commercial facility (a licensed and insured public facility selling lodging accommodations to travelers).

WSU does not reimburse lodging expenses when the traveler does not incur expenses for lodging because a state agency or another outside organization furnishes it.

#### Shared Economy Lodging
AirBNB (Air Bed and Breakfast), VRBO (Vacation Rentals by Owner), and similar shared economy lodging companies are considered to be commercial lodging facilities and may be booked by the traveler. All standard travel policies apply to the use of shared economy lodging facilities.

All related fees for the reservation, e.g. cleaning fees, must be included in the calculation of the lodging per diem rate, which may not exceed the maximum lodging rate for the location. Taxes are not included in the calculation of the lodging per diem rates, but may be reimbursed (see Taxes).

#### Departure, Arrival, and Cancellation Fees
When booking lodging accommodations, travelers are to be aware of fees associated with early departure or arrival and cancellation of the reservation. WSU does not reimburse for such fees without an approved exception from the Controller's Office.

#### Risks of the Booking and Quality of Facility
When selecting a lodging venue, the traveler assumes the risks of the booking and quality of the facility, including safety features of the facility and assurance for her or his own safety.

NOTE: Shared economy lodging facilities may not be required to comply with the same code and safety requirements as other commercial facilities. The University strongly recommends that travelers research lodging options thoroughly.

WSU is not responsible for costs incurred if lodging is not up to the standards of the traveler upon arrival.

#### Location
WSU does not reimburse lodging expenses incurred at a lodging facility located at either the traveler's official station or official residence (see SAAM 10.30.40.a) except as follows:

- As an allowable moving cost (see BPPM 70.61).
Meals and Lodging

Location (cont.)

- In emergency situations when the President determines that employees performing critical University functions must remain at their work stations.

- When an employee, acting in a custodial or leadership role must, as a part of their official duties, lodge with students or other University clients, e.g., coaches lodging with student athletes.

Fifty-Mile Rule

WSU does not reimburse lodging expenses incurred at a lodging facility located within fifty miles of the closer of either the traveler's official station or official residence. (SAAM 10.30.40.b) Exceptions to this requirement include:

- An overnight stay in commercial lodging which eliminates travel for back-to-back late night/early morning meetings. The supervising administrator authorizes this exception on the Travel Authority.

- An overnight stay in commercial lodging due to health or safety concerns. (See also BPPM 95.01.) The traveler promptly notifies his or her supervisor when this exception is invoked and provides an explanation on the Travel Expense Voucher.

- When the approving administrator determines that staying overnight is more economical to the University than returning to the official station or residence. The approving administrator provides a justification and analysis, which is attached to the Travel Authority or Travel Expense Voucher.

Direct Billing for Lodging

A department may request that the vendor directly bill the department for lodging in accordance with this policy:

- For all nonemployees.

- For WSU employees, one or more of the following must be true to request a direct bill:
  - Employees are accompanying students or nonemployees.
  - Cost savings for WSU are available for using a block of hotel rooms, rather than reimbursing the traveler for each hotel room purchased, and more than five employees are traveling.
Meals and Lodging

Direct Billing for Lodging (cont.)

NOTE: When a contract is required in association with lodging, the contract must be processed by the appropriate central administrative office (e.g., Contracts Office), or a person to whom delegated contracting authority has been granted in accordance with BPPM 10.10. While a department may, within the scope of this policy, use direct billing, the department is not authorized to enter into contracts without an official delegation of contracting authority.

Payment of Direct Billing for Lodging

Any payments made in accordance with this policy on direct billing are to be supported, at a minimum, by the following documents:

- A copy of the agreement entered into between the lodging provider and WSU stating the lodging to be provided and the applicable charges;

- A list of the University employees and other attendees for whom such lodging services were provided and the dates the services were provided; and

- A sufficiently detailed bill to ensure that payments are made in conformance with the written agreement between the parties.

Payment using a WSU purchasing card is allowed in accordance with this policy. When purchasing lodging using a purchasing card, the department is required to:

- Maintain all receipts and ensure that the receipts are not also submitted for reimbursement on a Travel Expense Voucher.

- Ensure that no prohibited or nonreimbursable expenses attributable to an individual traveler are included on the bill.

- Include any Travel Authority numbers and the purpose of the trip on all purchasing documentation.

- Review per diem rates and include lodging exceptions or discretionary funds for any overages as needed.

Authorized Travel Only

The nonemployee traveler must be authorized to travel for the University. See BPPM 95.14 for applicants, 95.13 for students, and 95.25 for speakers.
Meals and Lodging

Maximum Rates
Direct-billed lodging costs are to either conform to state of Washington lodging rates (see BPPM 95.19) or meet requirements of the Lodging Exception Rules.

Documentation
If the vendor requires a written authorization for the lodging purchase, process a Departmental Requisition (see BPPM 70.10) or a Department Order (see BPPM 70.07).

The Travel Authority Number is to be referenced on all documents used to process the direct lodging payment.

Meals
The Executive Director of Business Services/Controller does not authorize direct billing of travel meals.

Shared Lodging
When two or more WSU travelers share lodging, each traveler enters the actual amount he or she spent for lodging on the Travel Expense Voucher.

Each Travel Expense Voucher is to include the name of the other traveler(s) under Travel Details (see BPPM 95.20).

If each traveler pays a portion of the lodging, one traveler submits the original lodging receipt and the other submits a copy. The traveler submitting the copy indicates under Travel Details that the other named traveler is submitting the original receipt.

If one traveler pays the entire lodging bill, both travelers so indicate under Travel Details. The traveler paying the bill submits the original lodging receipt for reimbursement.

When lodging is shared with someone not involved with official business, e.g., a spouse, the University reimburses the official traveler at the single-room rate. The traveler or department is responsible for obtaining the appropriate single-room rate from the lodging provider.

Requests To Exceed Maximum Lodging Rates
Except as specified below, reimbursement for lodging costs may not exceed the Maximum Lodging Amount for the location. The following exceptions apply to all high cost and other locations, including foreign destinations. See BPPM 95.19 for Maximum Lodging Amounts. When any exception to the Maximum Lodging Amount is used, the traveler is to select the most economical room available under the circumstances.
Meals and Lodging

Lodging Exception Ceiling

If one of the following conditions applies and is approved, the maximum reimbursable lodging amount is the Lodging Exception Ceiling, which is 150 percent of the total allowable reimbursement rate (meals and lodging) for the location.

Lodging Exception Rules

The approving administrator (see BPPM 95.01) may authorize reimbursement for actual lodging expense up to the Lodging Exception Ceiling when at least one of the following six Lodging Exception Rules applies:

1. When costs in the area have escalated for a brief period, either during special events or disasters.

2. When lodging accommodations are not available in the area at or below the Maximum Lodging Amount, and the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodging at a removed site would be consumed by additional transportation and other costs.

3. When the traveler attends a meeting, conference, convention, or training session where he or she is expected to have business interaction with other participants in addition to scheduled events, and it is anticipated that maximum benefit will be achieved by authorizing the traveler to stay at the lodging facility.

4. When a traveler is assigned to accompany an elected official, foreign dignitary, or others as authorized by law, and is required to stay in the same lodging facility.

5. To comply with provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or when the health and safety of the traveler is at risk.

6. When a meeting room is required and it is more economical to acquire special lodging accommodations, e.g., a suite, than to acquire a meeting room and a room for lodging.

Applicable Lodging Exception Rule 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and/or 6 above must be referenced on a Travel Authority signed by the approving administrator.
Meals and Lodging

Expenses Exceeding 150 Percent

When *all three* of the following circumstances apply, the Executive Director of Business Services/Controller may approve payment of lodging expenses in excess of 150 percent of the applicable maximum per diem amount for the location:

- The traveler is required to attend a meeting, conference, convention, or training session where the traveler is expected to have business interaction with other participants in addition to scheduled events.

- It is anticipated that maximum benefit will be achieved by authorizing the traveler to stay at the lodging facilities where the meeting, conference, convention, or training session is held.

- The lowest available advertised lodging rate at the lodging facility exceeds 150 percent of the applicable maximum per diem amount for the location.

Documentation supporting the lodging rates is to be attached to the TEV or its file location referenced.

Lodging for Meetings/Sessions

Maximum lodging amounts are not always sufficient to support the rental of facilities needed to host a meeting, conference, convention, or training session. When this occurs, the approving administrator may approve increasing the lodging reimbursement up to 125 percent the applicable maximum allowable lodging rate.

Receipts

An *original* itemized lodging receipt indicating the room rate and all applicable charges and taxes must be submitted with the TEV. The receipt must indicate that the lodging vendor was paid.

Lost Lodging Receipts

If a lodging receipt is unavailable or lost, a traveler may submit a completed and signed Affidavit of Lost Receipt to Travel Services. After verification Travel Services may approve reimbursement on an exception basis.

**TRAVEL TRAILERS/CAMPERS**

When a traveler elects to use a travel trailer or camper in lieu of commercial lodging facilities for his/her convenience, lodging reimbursement is the actual space rental cost as evidenced by a receipt not to exceed the nonhigh cost lodging rate. The traveler is not reimbursed for the rental or lease cost of the travel trailer or camper. Meal reimbursement is at the nonhigh cost rate designated in *BPPM 95.19*. 
Meals and Lodging

TRAVEL TRAILERS/ CAMPERS (Cont.)

The Executive Director of Business Services/Controller, with the traveler's concurrence, may approve the use of travel trailers or campers if suitable commercial lodging is not available, state lodging is not provided, and there is a benefit to WSU for the traveler to remain at a temporary work station rather than commute to suitable lodging. Prior written approval is required for this exception to policy. Under this situation, the traveler is reimbursed according to the nonhigh cost hourly and daily rates.