



CHEROKEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA
Travel Policy and Procedures

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A. TRAVEL POLICY

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and establish procedures regarding reimbursement of expenses for Cherokee County employees and elected officials, incurring expenses when performing official County business away from the office. These expenses may arise when traveling out of town overnight, or on a day trip, when the individual returns home at night. The County assumes no obligation to reimburse any expenses that are not in compliance with this policy. All employees traveling on official County business are expected to exercise the same care and judgment in incurring expenses as they would if traveling on personal business at their own expense. The County reserves the right to refuse payment of any items or amounts that it considers excessive or personal in nature.

Whether an expense is reimbursable is determined by the situation in which it was incurred. The rules for expense reimbursement may be different depending upon whether the individual is out of town overnight, or only away from the office during the day, returning to his/her home in the evening. Therefore, this policy has two sections: **Out of Town, Overnight Travel; and Day Trip Procedures.** Each section defines the expenses that are reimbursable for each type of business activity.

2. Policy Objectives

The following are the objectives of the policy:

- Ensure a clear and consistent understanding of the policies and procedures related to business expenses incurred when individuals travel.
- Provide travelers conducting official County business with a reasonable level of comfort at reasonably low cost to the County.
- Provide reimbursement for travel related expenses incurred while executing official County business.

3. Responsibilities

For this policy to function effectively, there are certain responsibilities that the individuals who use the policy must assume:

- The traveler should exercise good judgment when incurring travel expenses and use County funds prudently.
- Travelers are expected to neither lose nor gain financially when conducting official County business.

- Department Heads should ensure that individuals traveling on behalf of the County are aware of, and will abide by, this policy and the related procedures.
- The Department Head approving the travel should ensure that:
 - 1) the trip is necessary;
 - 2) business value will be derived from it;
 - 3) funds are available in the budget account identified; and
 - 4) expenses charged by the traveler are necessary, reasonable, and reported accurately.
- The County Finance Department will reimburse travel expenses that have been approved as reasonable, are appropriately documented, and are within the guidelines of this policy.

4. General Policy

Cherokee County will reimburse the traveler as specified in this policy for expenses incurred when conducting official County business while traveling out of town, overnight or on a day trip. Employees and elected officials are encouraged to attend only those conventions, training programs and meetings that would bring benefit to the County. Reimbursements are contingent upon the availability of funds in the budgets of the respective departments and upon the submission of all appropriate documentation and receipts. Travel expenses incurred in connection with, or under, a grant will be reimbursed in accordance with this policy, except where the grant requirements are more restrictive.

B. OUT OF TOWN, OVERNIGHT TRAVEL PROCEDURES

1. AUTHORIZATIONS

All travel related to County business must be **authorized in advance** by the Department Head and the County Administrator or Assistant County Administrator. The purpose of the authorization is to assure that the trip has a **business purpose** and that budgeted funds are available to meet all department travel commitments.

Request for travel must be submitted using the CHEROKEE COUNTY REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND TRAVEL form (copy attached). Authorization for the proposed trip should occur as follows:

<u>Traveler:</u>	<u>Authorized By:</u>
<u>Employee</u>	<u>Department Head and County Administrator or Assistant</u>
<u>Department Head</u>	<u>County Administrator or Assistant County Administrator</u>
<u>Assistant County Administrator</u>	<u>County Administrator</u>

The REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND TRAVEL form must be sent to the Procurement Officer at least thirty (30) business days prior to the expected departure date.

The P-Card is the preferred method for paying for meeting and seminar fees, airfares, hotels, and when appropriate, rental cars.

2. TRANSPORTATION

Travel by County vehicle is preferred and encouraged. The length of the trip, time spent traveling, and cost of traveling should be considered in determining mode of travel.

- **Air Travel**

Air travel should be arranged, and tickets purchased only after receiving approval for the trip from the Department Head and County Administrator or Assistant Administrator. Airline flights must be booked at no more than the coach fare rate. Purchasing airline tickets prior to approval puts the employee at risk of paying for the tickets personally.

A traveler may, after approval, book airline tickets at a reduced rate in conjunction with a conference/convention or directly with the airline, including via the internet. Department Heads and travelers should be cautious regarding the cost/benefit of work time spent searching for low price airline tickets.

It should be noted that that all cost associated with restrictions on airline tickets, such as fee for ticket changes, are the responsibility of the traveler and will only be reimbursed by the County if the flight change is at the request of the County. Extended stayovers or early departures for the purpose of reduced airfares must result in **overall cost savings for the County and require approval** by the Department Head and County Administrator or Assistant County Administrator.

Extended stayovers or early departures for personal purposes prior to or following official County business will be funded by the County at the lower of the actual airline ticket cost, or the cost of the tickets that could have been purchased for the travel period required by the official County business. This provision requires sufficient documentation to support this determination.

Cherokee County reimburses only for the lowest cost to the County, whether it is airline, mileage or fuel. For example, if a traveler chooses to drive but the airline fare is less than the County would reimburse up to the lower of the airline fare or mileage.

Receipt – If an airline ticket is purchased by the traveler, reimbursement of the expense will be based on submission of the airline receipt from the ticket purchase.

- **Rental Cars**

Due to liability, leasing of rental cars is prohibited without prior approval of the employees Department Head and County Administrator or Assistant County Administrator. Travelers should request approval of a rental car only when other transportation is not available. When renting a vehicle, the traveler should accept the full insurance coverage offered by the rental agency. Reimbursement of rental car expenses requires submission of the receipt.

- **County Owned Vehicles**

County policy is for the traveler to use a County owned pool vehicle or assigned County vehicle, especially when several people may be attending the same meeting or event.

- Reimbursement will be allowed for out-of-pocket emergency repairs only. Receipts for these expenses must be submitted.
- County vehicles have an assigned fuel card in each vehicle, that is to be used for fuel purchases only.

- The employee is responsible for returning the vehicle with a full tank of gas, using the vehicle's gas card. A receipt should be obtained for all gas purchases, and the receipt should be signed by the driver and turned in with the keys.

- **Personal Vehicles**

Travelers may use their personal vehicles for official County business when a county vehicle is not available and if it is deemed necessary and approved in advance by the Department Head or Administration. It is the responsibility of the owner of the vehicle being used for the County business to have insurance coverage for their protection and for the protection of any passengers. If the traveler drives a personal vehicle, his/her insurance policy covers vehicle damage, and any expenses incurred in an accident.

When driving a personal vehicle, the County will reimburse mileage at the standard mileage rate calculated on the actual miles traveled, exclusive of normal commuting mileage. If an employee leaves their home driving a personal vehicle for a business trip and returns directly to their home, the mileage to be reimbursed is the total trip mileage minus the normal one day commuting mileage. The mileage rate covers all transportation and operating costs of the vehicle, including gas. The County issued fuel cards are PROHIBITED from being used for fueling a personal vehicle.

Reimbursement will be made for tolls and parking fees incurred while conducting County business. Amounts must be reported on the Reimbursement Claim Form, and receipts must be submitted for tolls (if available) and parking fees.

THE COUNTY WILL NOT REIMBURSE TRAVELERS FOR PARKING TICKETS, FINES OR MOVING VIOLATIONS OR VEHICLE TOWING CHARGES.

- **Ground Transportation**

Reimbursement for ground transportation, such as trains, airport shuttles, buses, and taxis are authorized when incurred while out of town, overnight on County business. Receipts must be submitted for all non-commuter train and bus travel, all airport shuttle fares, and any taxi fares.

3. **Lodging**

Payment or reimbursement of lodging costs will not be made for local accommodations within the county or stays within 60 miles of the employee's home, unless otherwise approved by the County Administrator or Assistant County Administrator.

Reimbursement for hotel/motel costs shall be for the traveler only, at actual cost of the lodging dictated by a particular situation. Travelers are expected to use good judgement and fiscal prudence when making reservations. It is recommended that when attending conferences and conventions, travelers should use the discounted hotel rates (blocked rooms) offered by the conference organizers for conference attendees. Whenever possible, travelers should utilize discounts available to them, such as the government employee rate many hotels offer. Reimbursement will be based upon submission of the official hotel receipt showing a zero-balance due.

If the traveler is unable to honor the reservation, it is the traveler's responsibility to ensure that the room reservation is cancelled in compliance with the cancellation terms established by the hotel and obtain a refund of any deposit made by the County. If the deposit was paid by the traveler via a personal credit card and the amount was previously reimbursed to the traveler, the deposit must be returned to the County within five (5) business days of the cancellation.

4. **Meal Expenses**

The traveler will be reimbursed per diem amounts for meal expenses when traveling out of town, overnight. The County will reimburse meal costs at the County's established rate as shown in the table below. The County does not reimburse any purchases of alcoholic beverages.

The breakdown of per-diem amounts for in-state travel are as follows:

Breakfast	\$12.00
Lunch	\$18.00
Dinner	\$28.00
Total	\$58.00

The breakdown of per-diem amounts for out-of-state travel are as follows:

Breakfast	\$15.00
Lunch	\$20.00
Dinner	\$30.00
Total	\$65.00

The per diem rates include taxes, tips, and any associated delivery charges. Per-diem rates may not always cover the full cost of meals ordered. The County has no liability for meal costs incurred that are in excess of the approved per diem.

When a partial day's reimbursement is necessary, such as at the beginning of or end of a trip, the following guidelines apply:

1. Breakfast shall not be claimed if the traveler leaves Cherokee County after 7:00 a.m. on the day of departure or if the return to Cherokee County is before 12:00 p.m. on the day of return.
2. Lunch shall not be claimed if the traveler leaves Cherokee County after 11:00 a.m. on the day of departure or if the return to Cherokee County is before 1:30 p.m. on the day of return.
3. Dinner shall not be claimed if the traveler leaves Cherokee County after 4:00 p.m. on the day of departure or if the return to Cherokee County is before 7:00 p.m. on the day of return.

The employee will not be eligible for the portion of the per diem that relates to meals which are provided at a conference as part of a conference registration (for example, lunch is usually provided and included in conference registration fees), or when the hotel provides breakfast.

The conference or meeting agenda/schedule is REQUIRED for reimbursement of meals. Meal Receipts are not required.

Registration Fees

If a traveler pays a conference or seminar registration fee onsite, rather than requesting a direct payment in advance, a receipt for the payment must be submitted for reimbursement.

5. Monitoring

Department Heads and are responsible for monitoring travel and evaluating travel in a judicious manner to ensure that time spent away from the office is reasonable and necessary. Approval prior to traveling will aid in ensuring that funds are approved and available in the Department's budget. **All travelers are responsible for submitting a completed REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND TRAVEL form to the Procurement Officer within fourteen (14) business days of their return to the office.** All "required" receipts must be submitted with the REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM. The

completed REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM form must be reviewed and approved by the Department Head for reasonableness of the amounts reported in accordance with this policy and for completeness and accuracy before the REIMBURSEMENT is sent to Purchasing.

6. Other Matters

Cancellations

In the event of cancellation of travel, the Procurement Officer must be notified immediately to avoid unnecessary payment of expenses. The traveler must ensure that any hotel or registration reservations are cancelled to avoid billing. If any deposits have been made, such as for a hotel, it is the traveler's responsibility to ensure the deposits are returned to the County.

C. Day Trip Procedures

1. Definition

Day trips are defined as those activities that require the individual to be out of the County office, on official County business for the day or part of the day, when the individual is not out of town overnight.

2. Authorization

Day trip expenses must be **authorized in advance** by the Department Head and County Administrator or Assistant County Administrator. The purpose of the authorization is to assure the necessity and business purpose of the activity and the availability of budget funds.

3. Transportation

- **Air Travel**

If a day trip involves air travel, the procedures outlined for **Out of Town, Overnight Travel** must be followed.

- **Vehicle**

The mode of transportation most frequently used for day trips is the automobile.

1. Use of County owned vehicle

County policy is for the traveler to use a County owned pool vehicle or assigned County vehicle, especially when several people may be attending the same meeting or event.

- Reimbursement will be allowed for out-of-pocket emergency repairs only. Receipts for these expenses must be submitted.
- County vehicles have an assigned fuel card in each vehicle, that is to be used for fuel purchases only.
- The employee is responsible for returning the vehicle with a full tank of gas, using the vehicle's gas card. A receipt should be obtained for all gas purchases, and the receipt should be signed by the driver and turned in with the keys.

2. Use of Personal Vehicle

Travelers may use their personal vehicles for official County business when a County owned vehicle is not available and it is approved in advance by their Department Head, and the County Administrator or Assistant County

Administrator. It is the responsibility of the owner of a vehicle being used for County business to have insurance coverage for their protection and for the protection of any passengers. If a traveler drives a personal vehicle, his/her insurance policy covers any vehicle damage, and any expenses incurred in an accident. Mileage reimbursement will be based on the County's standard per mile reimbursement rate for the actual miles driven while conducting the County's business and reduced for normal commuting mileage when applicable.

Parking expenses incurred while on official County business is reimbursable with the submission of receipts.

PARKING VIOLATIONS, FINES FOR MOVING VIOLATIONS AND VEHICLE TOWING CHARGES ARE NOT REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES.

- **Ground Transportation**

If a day trip involves ground transportation, such as taxis and commuter buses, the procedures outline under **Out of Town, Overnight Travel** must be followed.

4. Registration and Seminar Fees

If the traveler pays the registration fee for a seminar or program, the amount is reimbursable upon submission of the receipt.

5. Meals

The traveler will be reimbursed per diem amounts for meal expenses on a day trip. The County will reimburse meal costs at the County's established rate as shown in the table below. The County does not reimburse any purchases of alcoholic beverages.

The breakdown of per-diem amounts for in-state travel are as follows:

Breakfast	\$12.00
Lunch	\$18.00
Dinner	\$28.00
Total	\$58.00

The breakdown of per-diem amounts for out-of-state travel are as follows:

Breakfast	\$15.00
Lunch	\$20.00
Dinner	\$30.00
Total	\$65.00

The per diem rates include taxes, tips, and any associated delivery charges. Per-diem rates may not always cover the full cost of meals ordered. The County has no liability for meal costs incurred that are in excess of the approved per diem.

When a partial day's reimbursement is necessary, such as a day trip, the following guidelines apply:

- Breakfast shall not be claimed if the traveler leaves Cherokee County after 7:00 a.m. on the day of departure or if the return to Cherokee County is before 12:00 p.m. on the day of return.
- Lunch shall not be claimed if the traveler leaves Cherokee County after 11:00 p.m. on the day of departure or if the return to Cherokee County is before 1:30 p.m. on the day of return.
- Dinner shall not be claimed if the traveler leaves Cherokee County after 4:00 p.m. on the day of departure or if the return to Cherokee County is before 7:00 p.m. on the day of return.

The employee will not be eligible for the portion of per diem that relates to meals which are provided at a conference or meeting as part of registration (for example, breakfast or lunch that is provided as part of the registration fees).

The conference or meeting agenda/schedule is REQUIRED for reimbursement of meals.

Registration Fees

If a traveler pays a conference or seminar registration fee onsite, rather than requesting a direct payment in advance, a receipt for the payment must be submitted for reimbursement.

6. Monitoring

Department Heads and are responsible for monitoring travel and evaluating travel in a judicious manner to ensure that time spent away from the office is reasonable and necessary. Approval prior to traveling will aid in ensuring that funds are approved and available in the Department's budget. **All travelers are responsible for submitting a completed REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND TRAVEL form to the Procurement Officer within fourteen (14) business days of their return to the office.**

All required receipts must be submitted with the REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM. The completed REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM form must be reviewed and approved by the

Department Head for reasonableness of the amounts reported in accordance with this policy and for completeness and accuracy before the REIMBURSEMENT is sent to Purchasing.

7. Other Matters

Cancellations

In the event of cancellation of travel, the Procurement Officer must be notified immediately to avoid unnecessary payment of expenses. The traveler must ensure that any registration is cancelled to avoid billing. If any registration fees have been prepaid, it is the traveler's responsibility to ensure the fees are returned to the County.