



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the Chief
Financial Officer

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TO: Agency Chief Financial Officers
Senior Accountable Travel Officials

FROM: Stan McMichael *[Signature]* 3/26/15
Associate Chief Financial Officer, Financial Policy and Planning

SUBJECT: Approval Authority Guidance for Actual Expense Reimbursement
Requests Above Per Diem

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide updated information for the Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR) published on December 8, 2015. Updates include approval level thresholds for actual expenses above the per diem rate and clarification on delegating approval authority for such expenses.

Agency or Staff Office Heads may take the following actions regarding actual expense reimbursement requests:

- Approve requests up to 300 percent (per [41 Code of Federal Regulations, Subtitle F, Federal Travel Regulation](#), reimbursements are limited to 300 percent; there is no authority to exceed this ceiling.).
- Delegate the authority to approve non-emergency requests up to 150 percent.
- Delegate the authority to approve requests for hazard related emergencies (i.e. disease, fire, natural disasters), *not to exceed 300 percent*, to the Senior Accountable Travel Official.
- Retain the authority (do not delegate) to approve non-emergency requests over 150 percent.

Agencies can elect to have the designated approving official or Agency/Staff Office Head authorize/approve the request as a routing official through the electronic travel system (ETS), currently ConcurGov, and/or complete and sign the attached *Request for Actual Expense above Per Diem* form; the signed form must be uploaded in the ETS.

Authorizing and Delegating Officials:

- An Agency Head is the head of an organizational unit of the Department who reports to an Under Secretary;
- A Staff Office Head is the head of an administrative staff office who reports to the Secretary, or the Inspector General.
- A Staff Office is a Departmental Administrative office whose head reports to the Assistant Secretary for Administration or officials within the Office of the Secretary.
- State Directors are not considered Agency or Staff Office Heads.

Approving officials should ensure requests are approved in advance of travel (pre-approved). Reimbursement can be approved after the travel is completed (post approval) when the approving official determines one of the following occurred:

- Pre-approval was not necessary and/or possible; or
- Unanticipated, unusual, and/or extenuating circumstances caused necessary expenses to be greater than the authorized per diem allowance.

This memorandum supersedes any previously issued *Approval Authority Guidance for Actual Expense above Per Diem* guidance.

If you have any questions, please contact Marie Butler, Travel Policy Team Lead, Fiscal Policy Division, at 202-690-0290 or Marie.Butler@usda.gov.

Attachment

cc: Travel Policy Users Group