

Williamson County, Tennessee

Williamson County Government Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy and Procedures

The procedures in this policy govern travel at Williamson County expense. Travel expense reimbursement will not be made unless the travel is made and the reimbursement claimed for travel is in accordance with this travel policy. It is the responsibility of the employee to be familiar with the travel policy and adhere to the policies and procedures within. Deliberate disregard of these regulations while traveling on County business or filing an intentionally misleading or fraudulent travel claim is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Williamson County Government provides Purchasing Cards which may be used for travel expenses and other purchases that do not require purchase orders. Employees are encouraged to use the Purchasing Card for travel and other approved purchases when possible. The Purchasing Card Policy and Procedures should be followed when using the Purchasing Card for travel or other approved purchases.

GENERAL POLICY:

1. Travel expenses will be considered for reimbursement only when the funds are available within the requesting departments approved budget. It is the responsibility of the Department Head or Elected Official to verify funds are available before authorizing travel.
2. Williamson County employees are encouraged to use a Williamson County Purchasing card for lodging, meals, transportation and other related travel expenses. The Travel Policies and Procedures herein shall be followed as well as the Williamson County Government Purchasing Card Policies and Procedures.
3. When an employee does not use the Williamson County Purchasing Card for travel, claims for travel expense reimbursement must be submitted on a Williamson County Travel and Expense Reimbursement Form no later than sixty (60) days after completion of travel (IRS requirement). Blank Forms are available in the Accounting office and on the County website under Budget Department – Forms and Applications.
4. Travel may not be undertaken unless authorized in advance by the proper authority. All overnight travel requests must be approved by the County Mayor for his direct department reports. Department Travel Request Forms may be found in the County Mayor's office, Accounting Department and on the county website. Other County Elected Officials (other than the Mayor's departments), will approve overnight travel as their budget allows. Policies and procedures herein are minimum standards for Departments. Departments may establish additional guidelines if necessary.
5. Travel must be either necessary for the proper execution of official Williamson County business or in justifiable pursuit of the betterment of Williamson County. Professional meetings and conferences must be directly associated with the employee's duties and role within his/her job classification.
6. Travel expenses that are to be paid from special grant or contract funds will be in accordance with the provisions of the grant or contract guidelines. It is the requesting department's responsibility to make sure those specified guidelines are followed. If there are no specific guidelines established by the grant or contract, expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with this policy.
7. Expenses associated with travel of an employee's spouse, family or friends will not be reimbursed by Williamson County. Employees shall not arrange travel that is less advantageous or causes greater expense to Williamson County to accommodate personal travel plans. Any additional expenses incurred as a result of personal travel, including but not limited to extra hotel nights, additional stopovers, meals or transportation are the sole responsibility of the employee. Notation of employee's spouse or other individual's traveling with the employee should be noted on any applicable forms or receipts.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST FORMS:

1. The Williamson County Travel Reimbursement Request Form must be used to obtain reimbursement for travel expenses when a Williamson County Purchasing Card is not used for travel.
2. The travel expense report must be itemized and properly completed. Totals must be provided for each column, and the grand total of the claim must be shown. Legible original detailed receipts must be attached. All costs incurred are subject to audit before reimbursement is issued. All information necessary to support the claim must be disclosed, including the full nature, purpose and details of the travel.
3. A separate Travel Reimbursement Request Form must be completed by each employee seeking reimbursement for travel expenses. If one employee has paid for another employee, the name and reason must be noted on the receipts and the reimbursement form.
4. All Travel Reimbursement Request Forms must be signed by the person filing the claim as well as his/her department head before a claim will be accepted. Signatures must be original.

TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED EXPENSES:

General:

1. When traveling, the employee should be as conservative as possible. The lower cost should be selected whenever possible. Travel should be the most direct route possible; an individual traveling an indirect route must assume any additional expenses. Carpooling should be taken advantage of as possible.
2. Transportation should be by common carriers whenever practical and employees should take advantage of reduced rates, advanced booking, and any other discounts available at the time. Rates shouldn't exceed tourist rates or coach fares.
3. Unexpected expenses must have detailed receipts with a detailed explanation of any deviation from policy.

Mileage:

1. If an employee is furnished a county-owned vehicle, mileage will not be allowed. County owned vehicles have a fuel card assigned to the vehicle. If for any reason the county fuel card does not process, the employee may use the County Purchasing Card if available or will be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses.
2. If an employee must use their personally-owned vehicle, mileage will be reimbursed based on the rate set by the Internal Revenue Service as of January 1st of each year. The Travel Reimbursement Request Form must indicate the employee's origin and destination, purpose of business and must show the mileage by odometer/trip meter reading.
3. Employees may use Mapquest to calculate mileage to destinations. The County does not reimburse employees for normal commuting mileage, therefore; procedures for calculating mileage when using a personal vehicle are as follows:
 - a. If an employee begins or ends a trip at his/her official work station, reimbursable mileage will be the mileage from the official work station to the destination.
 - b. If work is performed by the employee in route to his/her official work station, reimbursable mileage is computed by deducting the employee's normal commuting mileage from the actual mileage driven.
 - c. If an employee begins or ends his/her trip at his/her residence without stopping at his/her official station, reimbursable mileage will be the lesser of the mileage from the employee's residence to his/her destination or his/her official station to the destination. On weekends or holidays, the employee may be reimbursed for the actual mileage from his/her residence to the destination.
 - d. If an employee travels between destinations without returning to his/her official work station or his/her residence, the actual mileage between those destinations is reimbursable.

Air Travel:

1. Air travel reservations should be made as far in advance as possible in order to take advantage of reduced fares. Williamson County will pay only the cost of the lowest coach class fare available. Individuals may not deliberately patronize a single airline to accumulate frequent flyer miles if less expensive tickets are available on another airline.
2. Airline baggage fees for up to (2) bags will be reimbursed.
3. Fees for handling of promotional equipment or materials if required for training/presentations will be allowed.

Ground Transportation:

1. **COURTESY CARS** – Many hotels have courtesy cars which will take you to and from the airport at no charge. The hotel will generally have a well-marked courtesy phone at the airport if this service is available. Employees should take advantage of this free service whenever possible.
2. **AIRPORT SHUTTLE OR BUS** – Airport shuttles generally travel to and from major hotels for a minimal fee. Airport shuttles or busses are generally located near the airport's baggage claim area and can be less expensive than cabs if available.
3. **TAXI FARES** – In traveling between hotels or other lodging and meeting or conference sites, reasonable taxi fares with receipt will be allowed.
4. **RENTAL CARS** – Rental of vehicles can be costly. This form of transportation should be utilized only when a County provided auto is not available and the use of a personal vehicle is not an option. The use of a rental car should be approved by the Budget Director.
5. **TOLLS AND FERRY FEES** – Reasonable tolls and ferry fees will be allowed if a necessity for transportation.
6. **PARKING** – Necessary charges for airport and overnight hotel parking will be allowed. The costs of parking tickets, fines, car washes, valet service, etc. are the responsibility of the employee and will not be reimbursed by the County. Receipts must be furnished for airport and hotel parking. The lowest cost (economy) parking will be reimbursed.

Lodging:

1. Reservations for lodging will be made by the employee traveling or by a designee appointed within the department by the Department Head or Elected Official. If available, the employee should use a Williamson County Purchasing Card for payment of lodging accommodations.
2. The maximum rates that an employee will be reimbursed will be the same as those maintained by the U.S. General Services Administration for the federal employees within the continental United States (CONUS). This is found on the website: www.gsa.gov. If a city is not listed, then the general rate for the state will prevail. This schedule should be used for in-state and out-of-state travel. The CONUS list contains a standard reimbursement rate for lodging and meals and incidentals.
3. It is the Department Head/Elected Official or their designee's responsibility to ensure the rates provided on the CONUS list are adhered to by the employee. If the rates are not followed, the employee may not receive the full amount requested to be reimbursed. If a County Purchasing Card was used for travel, the employee may be requested to reimburse the County for amounts that are over the CONUS rates.
4. Lodging receipts are required and must itemize the room charges and taxes by date.
5. **If a Convention rate exceeds the maximum reimbursement rate on the CONUS list, the higher rate will be reimbursed if a convention brochure or registration form is provided as documentation.**
6. In the event a room is shared by employees and the room is charged to a Williamson County Purchasing Card, the employee with the room's charges on their statement should list the individual's names staying in the room.
7. In the event a room is shared by employees who are being reimbursed, both employees should attach an explanation to his/her travel claim detailing dates and other employee's names who shared the room. The lodging cost may be claimed by the employee who incurred the cost, or one half the double occupancy charges may be allowable for each employee.
8. If other means of payment for lodging are not an option, a check may be requested for a room deposit by presenting documentation supporting the request. A request for a check must be submitted in ample time to allow for processing.

Meals and Incidentals:

1. If available, the employee should use a Williamson County Purchasing Card for payment of meals and incidentals.
2. The maximum rates that an employee will be reimbursed for meals and incidentals (M & I) will be the same as those maintained by the U.S. General Services Administration for the federal employees within the continental United States (CONUS). This is found on the website: www.gsa.gov. If a city is not listed, then the general rate for the state will prevail. This schedule should be used for in-state and out-of-state travel. The CONUS list contains a standard reimbursement rate for lodging and meals and incidentals.

3. It is the Department Head/Elected Official or their designee's responsibility to ensure the rates provided on the CONUS list are adhered to by the employee. If the rates are not followed, the employee may not receive the full amount requested to be reimbursed. If a County Purchasing Card was used for travel, the employee may be requested to reimburse the County for amounts that are over the CONUS rates.
4. The maximum per diem rates on the CONUS schedule will be the standard used for calculation of reimbursement for meals and incidentals (M & I). Incidentals include miscellaneous cost such as tips, baggage handling, telephone calls, etc. as related to County business. Generally, the applicable maximum per diem rate for each calendar day of travel shall be determined by the location of lodging. If a city is not listed, then the general rate for the state will prevail.
5. No separate claim for a meal will be allowed when breakfast, lunch, or banquet is included in the registration form for a conference or training. Any meals included in the registration should be deducted from the CONUS rate for meals and incidentals.
6. Meals will not be reimbursed unless they are associated with overnight travel. A single meal (or meals) for employees on one-day travel status will not be allowed.
7. The purchase of alcohol or tobacco products will not be reimbursed. If using a County Purchasing Card, these type purchases should be requested on a separate ticket so the employee may pay for the purchase separately.
8. On-site fee internet access should be utilized when available. If internet access while traveling is desired, it will be at the travelers own expense. However, the Department Head/Elected Official may allow one charge per day if it is determined it is for the training or enhancement of the employees duties. This should be approved prior to traveling.

Registration Fees and Training Materials:

1. If available, the employee should use a Williamson County Purchasing Card for payment of registration fees and training materials. There must be detailed documentation/receipts for these charges. The fees should be the amount necessary to qualify the employee to attend conferences, conventions, meetings, workshops, etc. provided the attendance falls in line with the duties and responsibilities of the employee's job or office.

TRAVEL ADVANCES:

1. Travel advances will be granted under extraordinary circumstances. If other options of payment are not available, an employee may request a travel advance. A request for temporary travel advance should be sent to the County Budget Director two weeks prior to departure date with the estimated expenditures for the travel. No advance will be issued for less than \$100.00. This advance will be charged to the appropriate line item for the travel within the department's budget.
2. Each employee receiving a temporary travel advance for the first time must sign a payroll deduction authorization form which will allow the county to recover the advance from any salary owed the employee in the event of termination of employment or failure to submit a travel claim. This deduction from payroll should be used as a last resort in the event all other efforts to collect the advance have failed.
3. Upon return, the employee should submit an expense claim detailing the actual expenditures using the CONUS reimbursement schedules. This expense form should be reviewed by the Department Head/Elected Official or their designee to insure that all travel polices were followed. This claim should be the total allowable expenses with the advance amount being subtracted from the total expenses.
4. The claims should be forwarded to the Accounting Department to be matched with the advance. If the advance exceeds the actual expenses, the employee should attach his/her personal check to the Travel Reimbursement Request Form for the difference.
5. Any balance representing expenditures in excess of the advance will be reimbursed to the employee and charged to the appropriate line item where the advance originated within the department's budget.

EXTENDED TRAVEL:

1. Special arrangements should be made in advance with the County Mayor/Elected Official for employees on extended travel. This provision is to cover employees attending schools or institutes and employees performing auditing, investigative or like duties that may require absence from their official stations for more than one month.

HONORARIUMS:

1. The ability of an employee to accept any honorarium from private entities is limited to those occasions that are not in violation of the Code of Ethics of Williamson County. Generally, receiving honorariums from public or quasi-public entities, community organizations, or non-profit charitable or educational organizations are permissible as long as the honorarium is not given to persuade the employee to perform or refrain from performance of an act that the employee would be expected to perform, or refrain from performing, in the regular course of his/her duties. Should an employee accept a permissible honorarium, the employee must complete a gratuity form and file it with the County Clerk's office.

OTHER EXPENSES:

1. The County will not reimburse sales tax for items that are covered under other purchasing methods within the Williamson County's Purchasing Policy and Procedures.
2. Elected Officials/Department Heads may occasionally incur expenses for group breakfast, luncheons, or dinners for business purposes that are appropriate in the conduct of official County business. Such events should be occasioned by a meeting of long duration or by circumstances where it is more feasible to provide meals than to recess the meeting. Expenses for meals for employees occasioned by meetings or work sessions called by an Elected Official/Department Head are allowed. A detailed receipt or other satisfactory documentation which includes listing the individuals attending the meeting or work session is required for reimbursement. The Elected Official/Department Head should use the Williamson County Purchasing Card for these type purchases when available and are subject to the Policy and Procedures therein. No lavish or extravagant cost will be reimbursed.
3. Elected Officials/Department Heads may occasionally host guest of the State or conduct other official business (seminars/training), whereby reasonable cost of food and related cost will be reimbursed. When available, the Williamson County Purchasing Card should be used for these type functions. Detailed receipts and supporting documentation detailing how the event is relevant to the duties of the department will be required for reimbursement. No lavish or extravagant cost will be reimbursed.

EXCEPTIONS:

The County Budget Director shall have the authority under extenuating circumstances to grant exemption from any part of these rules and regulations when deemed appropriate and necessary and in the best interest of the County.

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