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**TO:** Agency Chief Financial Officers  
Senior Accountable Travel Officials

**FROM:** Lucas Castillo  
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**SUBJECT:** Local Travel Policy

This updated policy defines the Department's definition of local travel and local travel areas, and grants authority to approve lodging expense reimbursement while performing official business in the local travel area (for extenuating circumstances) to delegated officials.

In keeping with the intent of [Departmental Regulation \(DR\) 4080-811-002](#), *Telework and Remote Work Programs*, and the Office of Personnel and Management (OPM) [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#), local travel is considered official business travel performed by the most direct route within and adjacent to an employee's official worksite/duty location or approved alternate worksite. The proximity of travel to the employee's official worksite/duty station determines whether expenses are reimbursed as local travel expenses (as described in this policy), or as temporary duty (TDY) travel expenses (as described in 41 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), [Subtitle F, Federal Travel Regulation](#).) (FTR). Local travel does not include official travel approved on a TDY travel authorization, including round-trip travel to a common carrier terminal in the employee's local travel area in conjunction with the TDY assignment.

This policy addresses when local travel reimbursements may be authorized, based on the information stated in DR [2300-005](#), *Agricultural Travel Regulation (ATR)*, published December 8, 2015. As indicated in the ATR, local travel expenses that are normally incurred are reimbursed. Per diem expenses are not normally paid in the local travel area; however, there may be extenuating circumstances whereby these expenses may be allowable. Any references to a USDA agency, pertains to USDA mission areas, agencies, and staff offices.

As plans for the safe return to physical USDA workplaces and post-reentry policies are designed and implemented (where telework, mobile, and remote work are viewed as mission critical workplace flexibilities and are being integrated into workforce plans), local travel guidance is being updated to provide practical information (as a resource) to facilitate a smoother transition for agency employees regarding reimbursement for local travel.

Agencies may supplement, but not change, this Departmental policy. Agencies are encouraged to consult with Human Resources personnel to further clarify and define Departmental telework and remote policies as they relate to this policy.

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## **Policy**

USDA employees are generally entitled to be reimbursed local travel expenses incurred while performing official business in or around their official duty station/worksites or alternate (approved) worksites. However, reimbursement is limited to local travel expenses exceeding those the employee incurs for normal commuting. Further, a mission area, agency, or staff office may have separate written agreements or supplemental policy for local travel reimbursement with remote employees or those who conduct mobile work which modifies, and may limit, this entitlement.

Allowable local travel expenses may include such things as the cost of subway, bus, train, taxi, transportation network companies [TNC] (e.g., Uber, Lyft), innovative mobility technology companies [IMTC] (e.g., Zipcar, HyreCar, Getaround, Capital Bikeshare), mileage, tolls, and parking. The use of a rental car in or around the local travel area is strictly prohibited. Local travel expenses could be incurred in a variety of work-related situations, including, but not limited to, required attendance at meetings, conferences, other official functions, training events, or periodic work assignments at alternative duty locations in or around the official duty station/worksites. When a government-owned vehicle (GOV) is authorized, advantageous, and available, USDA agencies should consider using a GOV for local travel before choosing another option.

Employees should exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and using personal funds. Excess costs, circuitous routes, luxury accommodations, and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are not acceptable under this standard and will not be reimbursed. Employees are responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience (e.g., taxi or a TNC in lieu of available free shuttle, mass transportation, GOV, etc.).

Generally, USDA employees traveling for official business within their designated local travel area may not be reimbursed for lodging or meal expenses. However, an exception may be made for hazard-related emergencies which pose a threat to human life (such as disease, fire, or natural disasters) or threat to Federal property. In these cases, prior written approval from the Agency Administrator (or Staff Office Director) must be granted before incurring any expenses. This approval authority may be delegated to the applicable Senior Accountable Travel Official or the Chief Financial Officer; no further delegations are authorized. If an instance like the aforementioned arises, then an employee may use the Government-issued travel charge card to pay for lodging expenses within their official worksites/duty location.

Local travel is not available for reimbursement of employee commuting expenses. This includes instances where telework employees are directed to report to their official duty station on days not provided for in their official telework schedule (e.g., additional days or different days per pay period). However, if telework employees are directed to report to an alternate work location other than their normal work location for the day (i.e., departing

either from their regular telework location or their official duty station), local travel may be authorized consistent with this memorandum.

Some employees may be participating in the Transit Subsidy Program which is not compensation for commuting expenses but rather an incentive to encourage use of public transit. Telework employees are encouraged to manage their participation in this program so as to account for unanticipated days in which they will need to travel to the official duty station. Transit Subsidy benefits should not be used for purposes of official business travel which is appropriately reimbursed through local travel.

Local travel expense reimbursement shall be approved on a case-by-case basis. The employee seeking reimbursement must clearly illustrate and justify before incurring local travel expenses that the local travel is a necessary additional out-of-pocket expense, and not part of the normal commuting expenses.

Local travel expense reimbursements must be claimed within 30 days of incurring the expense; reimbursements should be made through the USDA agency's time and attendance system, or via direct entry into the Department's financial system. When requests are submitted via direct entry, they must be processed using the Local Travel Invoice module in the financial system to allow proper oversight.

Regardless of which method is used to process the local travel reimbursement claim (time and attendance system or financial system), the employee must complete and submit an OF-1164, *Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business* (or other Department approved reimbursement form) to their supervisor (or other approving official) for review and approval. Receipts or other appropriate documentation must be included, regardless of expense amount. The employee and the supervisor (or other delegated official) must maintain a copy of OF-1164 and the associated receipts, for six years in accordance with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) [General Records Schedule \(GRS\) 1.1: Financial Management and Reporting Records, Item 010](#).

## **Definitions**

**Agency Worksite.** The official Federal agency location where work activities are based, generally considered a centralized location of an employee's assigned organization. The term "regular worksite" is also used to describe the agency worksite. Source: OPM [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#).

**Alternate Worksite.** A work location, other than the official worksite, that satisfies all requisite Federal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to the workplace, where an employee performs their official duties. Source: [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002, Telework and Remote Work Programs](#).

**Compensatory Time Off for Travel.** Employees who are officially ordered to travel away from their official worksite may be afforded compensatory time off for travel, in certain

circumstances, based upon the approved travel itinerary. Compensatory time off for travel is earned by an employee for time spent in a travel status away from the employee's official worksite when such time is not otherwise compensable. Compensable refers to periods of time creditable as hours of work for the purpose of determining a specific pay entitlement. Source: OPM [Fact Sheet: \*Compensatory Time Off for Travel\*](#)

Commuting expenses. The costs incurred by taking any form of local transportation, e.g., bus, commuter buses, train, trolley, subway, taxi, TNC, or driving a car, between your residence and official worksite.

Local travel. USDA's local travel policy is any travel as a result of official business within the 50-mile radius of the employee's official worksite/duty station or approved alternate worksite (i.e., permanent residence), using the most direct route and lasting 12 hours or less. Source: [5 CFR 550.112\(j\)](#), *Computation of overtime work*, and [5 CFR 551.422\(d\)](#), *Time spent traveling*.

Local travel areas. This is based on the official worksite/duty station or approved alternate worksite; the local travel area will not be more than a 50-mile radius of geographic boundaries defined within each region. Source: [5 CFR 550.112\(j\)](#), *Computation of overtime work*, and [5 CFR 551.422\(d\)](#), *Time spent traveling*.

Locality Pay Area. An Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defined metropolitan statistical area or combined statistical area that determines certain location-based pay entitlements based on the employee's official duty station as documented on the employee's SF-50, *Notification of Personnel Action*. Source: [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), *Telework and Remote Work Programs*.

Mobile Work. Work characterized by routine and regular travel to conduct work in a customer's or other worksite as opposed to a single authorized alternate worksite. Examples include site audits, site inspections, investigations, property management, and work performed while commuting, traveling between worksites, or on TDY. Mobile workers do not need to report twice each bi-weekly pay period to the agency worksite established by the agency if the employee is performing work within the same geographic area (established for the purpose of a given pay entitlement) as the employee's agency worksite. For example, if a mobile employee with a varying work location works at least twice each bi-weekly pay period on a regular and recurring basis in the same locality pay area for the agency worksite, the employee need not report at least twice each bi-weekly pay period to that agency worksite to maintain entitlement to the locality payment for that area. Source: OPM [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#).

Official Duty Station. The management-approved location where employees regularly perform their official duties. If an employee physically reports to the employing Mission Area, agency, or staff office official worksite at least twice in a bi-weekly pay period, the employing Mission Area, agency, or staff office official worksite will be designated as the employee's official duty station. If the employee's work involves recurring travel or the employee's work location varies (mobile work) on a recurring basis, the official worksite

is the location where the work activities of the employee's position of record is based, as determined by the employing Mission Area, agency, or staff office, subject to the requirement that the official worksite must be in a locality pay area in which the employee is required to regularly perform work. A Mission Area, agency, or staff office must document an employee's official duty station on the employee's Notification of Personnel Action (Standard Form 50 (SF-50) or equivalent). Once the official duty station has been officially recorded on the SF-50, it cannot be changed without prior approval of the employing Mission Area, agency, or staff office accompanied by processing a formal, documented personnel action. Source: [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), *Telework and Remote Work Programs*.

Remote Work. A workforce flexibility arrangement under which an employee is scheduled to perform work within or outside the local commuting area of their Mission Area, agency, or staff office's worksite and is not required to report to the Mission Area, agency, or staff office worksite on a regular and recurring basis. Source: [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), *Telework and Remote Work Programs*, and OPM [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#).

Remote Work Arrangement. A work arrangement in which:

- a. The employee performs assigned official duties and other authorized activities at an approved alternate work location, typically the employee's residence, within or outside of the local commuting area of the Mission Area, agency, or staff office worksite;
- b. On a regular and continuing basis;
- c. Is not required to physically report to the Mission Area, agency, or staff office worksite on any frequent, regular, or recurring basis; and
- d. The approved alternate worksite is, for pay and other purposes, the employee's official duty station, as indicated on the employee's SF-50, per 5 CFR § 531.605, *Determining an employee's official worksite*.

Source: [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), *Telework and Remote Work Programs*.

Telework. A work arrangement in which an employee performs and completes official duties and responsibilities from an alternate worksite. Telework may be authorized for an entire duty day or a portion of one. Telework does not include work performed while in an official travel status, work performed while commuting to or from work, remote work, or mobile work. Source: [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), *Telework and Remote Work Programs*.

Unscheduled Telework. Telework that is authorized in response to specific duty status announcements issued by OPM or other authorized USDA officials for use during periods of inclement weather, a pandemic or public health crisis, or other emergency situations, or with prior supervisory approval, or telework used to maintain productivity during short-term disruptions to normal operating procedures. Source: [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), *Telework and Remote Work Programs*.

This policy is effective as of the date signed; retroactive payments are not allowed. This memorandum supersedes any previously issued policy on this subject. If you have additional questions or comments regarding this local travel policy, contact Marie Butler, Fiscal Policy Division Director, at [Marie.Butler@usda.gov](mailto:Marie.Butler@usda.gov).

**Local Travel Examples/Scenarios**

1. An employee reports to work each day at a USDA building (official worksite). This employee is entitled to full reimbursement of round-trip travel expenses if they must attend an official business meeting outside of the USDA building. Round-trip travel expenses are limited to those incurred to depart and return to the USDA building.
2. Peter's official worksite is at the USDA Headquarters located in Washington, DC. He commutes each day from home to the worksite in his personally owned vehicle (POV), 20 miles one-way; he does not pay for parking. Peter is asked to attend a business meeting in Fairfax, VA. On the day of the meeting, he drives directly to the meeting in his POV (30 miles one-way) and incurs a \$10 parking fee. What is Peter's local travel expense reimbursement?  
Explanation: Peter would be entitled to the parking fee (\$10) and the mileage reimbursement for the 20 additional miles (normal round-trip mileage is 40 miles; meeting round-trip is 60 miles).
3. Thomas teleworks from his residence in Madison, WI, 4 days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday); he reports to his official worksite on Wednesdays. Thomas is asked to attend training on Monday and Tuesday; the training location is 40 miles round-trip from his residence. Thomas' residence is 40 miles from his official worksite. What is Thomas' local travel expense reimbursement?  
Explanation: Thomas would not receive reimbursement for local travel, as the miles between his residence and the training location (40 miles) did not exceed the miles of his normal commute (40 miles).
4. Monica is approved for remote work from her residence in Long Beach, CA (making this her official duty station). She is asked by her supervisor to attend an event (business meeting, conference, training, etc.) in Los Angeles, CA, which is 35 miles one-way (70 miles round-trip) from her residence. Monica is authorized to drive her POV and park (\$25) at the offsite location. What is Monica's reimbursable local travel expense?  
Explanation: Monica's home is considered her USDA office; therefore, she is entitled to be reimbursed the full round-trip mileage (70 miles) and the \$25 parking fee to depart from and return to her USDA office.
5. Steve works remotely from his residence in St. Louis, MO. He decides to drive his POV to the local USDA building, 60 miles round-trip from his residence, as a matter of preference without prior approval. Steve pays \$30 to park at the USDA building. What is Steve's reimbursable local travel expense?  
Explanation: Since Steve works remotely from his residence (his USDA office), the local USDA building is considered an off-site location. Steve's supervisor did not request or approve the travel to the off-site location; therefore, Steve is not entitled to be reimbursed for local travel expenses.



6. Joe teleworks 2 days per week (Mondays and Tuesdays) in Lufkin, TX. His normal commute is 10 miles one-way (20 miles round-trip). When he drives to the USDA office on non-telework days (Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays), what is Joe's reimbursable travel expense?

Explanation: Joe would not receive reimbursement for local travel. Anytime Joe drives to the office, it is considered a commute, and not eligible for local travel reimbursement.

7. Henry's approved telework schedule indicates he teleworks on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; he reports to his official duty station 2 days a week. He is asked to report to his official duty station office on Tuesday (normally a telework day). What is Henry's local travel reimbursement?

Explanation: Henry would not receive a local travel reimbursement. Travel to the 'official' duty station is considered a normal commute and commuting is non-compensable.

8. Henry's approved telework schedule indicates he teleworks on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; he reports to his official duty station two days a week. He is asked to report to an alternate location (neither his telework location or his official duty station) on Tuesday (normally a telework day). What is Henry's local travel reimbursement?

Explanation: Henry would receive a local travel reimbursement for any expenses incurred above and beyond his normal commuting expenses.

9. Joanne is a remote worker who works within a 50-mile radius of Agency worksite. She is required to go into the Agency worksite for a meeting. What local travel reimbursement is Joanne entitled to?

Explanation: Unless the agency has a separate written agreement with Joanne regarding reporting to the Agency worksite (i.e., remote work agreement specifying travel to the Agency worksite is within 50-mile radius and is within the local commuting area), Joanne would receive reimbursement for mileage and any other expenses incurred to get to the worksite.

10. Sandra teleworks most of the week, going into her official duty station 2 days per pay period (her official duty station is her agency's USDA building); she receives reimbursement for round-trip commuting costs (from transit benefits) for the days she travels to the building.

- a. If the employee must attend a meeting at the office (i.e., her official duty station), then they are not entitled to local travel reimbursement of any round-trip travel costs incurred because these are commuting expenses to the duty station.
- b. If the employee must attend a meeting on a day they report to an official worksite (not teleworking), then they are entitled to a full reimbursement for expenses incurred for round-trip travel between the official worksite and the meeting location.



11. If an employee is a remote worker and only goes to the USDA building when required for meetings, then they would be reimbursed round-trip travel expenses for going to the USDA building.
  - a. If an employee's hiring agency's main office is in Washington, DC, and their remote work site is approved for Alexandria, VA, then the employee must be reimbursed for official local travel expenses when asked to come into the main office.
  - b. If the employee's hiring agency's main office is in Washington, DC, and their approved remote work site is in Chicago, IL, then they would be entitled to round-trip travel expense reimbursement (through the electronic travel system) if they were required to travel to Washington, DC, for official business.