



Travel Policy Revisions Effective January 1, 2026

Two Reminders from Maura

- Always keep in mind that EVERY SINGLE THING we do or spend money on is subject to an Open Records Request.
 - Think about how the documentation you submit might look as a “teaser” on the news.



- Treat the Bureau’s budget and wallet like they were your own.

Changes - 1a

Meals at Local Seminars and Meetings

- The previous policy had duplicate information in 4a
- Change: Removed “per IRS regulations, meals not included in the registration for an event, not requiring an overnight stay will be at the expense of the staff member.”
 - Definition: Place of Business: Location where the company's business is being conducted.
- Will now be reimbursed or charged on the bureau’s credit card for a meal incurred within the employee’s designated place of business.

What this means: If you attend a local conference, your meal will be reimbursed/covered, if a meal is not provided at the conference. The amount should be reasonable and the receipt is required.

Changes - 7a

Air Travel

- Travelers should research all fare types (main, main plus, main select on AA; equivalent on other airlines) in order to secure the lowest fare that includes seat assignments and baggage fees.

What this means: Research all fares and be a smart shopper.

Changes – 7i

Air Travel

- The cost for additional suitcases/baggage (within reason) is an allowable expense; this includes the surcharges airlines have implemented for checked luggage, including a second checked bag. Travelers are encouraged to pre-check a bag online which is at a reduced cost.

What this means: Pre-check a bag online to save money, if able.

Changes - 11a

Meals

- Actual expenses for personal food and beverage when traveling out of town are allowed up to a total amount of \$150 per day.
 - Unexpended amount does not carry over to the next day. It is now per day, versus the average days of the trip.

What this means: Prices continue to increase on food and beverages, but travelers are still expected to use sound judgement and be cost-conscious.

A Per Diem Was Considered

- During the policy review, there were several discussions on implementing a per diem, which is a defined dollar amount for the employee to spend without requiring receipts.
 - You would be off the hook for receipts but on the hook for using your own credit card, or using cash (either of your own, or through a cash advance).
- The per diem amount is dependent on where you are traveling to and the amount is determined by the IRS.
- The average per diem amount is \$70 per day.
 - \$70 is less than \$150. Considerably.

What this means: A per diem may be considered if receipts are not provided and expense reports are not turned in on time. By everyone. Routinely.

Next Steps

Receipts are a MUST.

This isn't difficult.

It's why a system with an App is used.

- If receipts are not routinely turned in with expense reports, one of two things may happen.
 - 1. If the issue is an individual one, the use of the Bureau's credit card will be revoked for that individual.
 - 2. If the issue is organization-wide, then the next step may be the implementation of the IRS-regulated \$70 per diem.

EXPENSE REPORT REMINDERS

- If you purchase goods, a detailed receipt is required no matter the amount.
 - If you purchase items for a gift basket, etc., a detailed receipt is required.
 - Restaurant receipts for meals are not a purchased “good.”
- When entertaining, first and last names as well as the company the person works for should be noted. This includes writers, bloggers and city staff.
 - First and Last Name, Title, Company and what was discussed
- We are sales tax-exempt in Texas. If you pre-arrange an event or meal function, give the tax-exempt form to the establishment.

EXPENSE REPORT REMINDERS

- If dining with another staff person, divide the total by 2 and classify your meal as “F&B-out of town” and the other person as “other”.
- If your cell phone invoice is not in your name, or you share it with others, note your cell phone number in the REASON section of the line item or highlight your number on your invoice. It must be clear which cell number is yours.
- IF YOU ARE USING UBER OR LYFT, please make sure you are using your personal card for personal travel. Frequent errors will result in you having to remove your Bureau card from your account.

Questions?