

XXI. REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES

A. POLICY

AURA Board and Committee members, when required to travel on official AURA business shall be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses upon the approval of a travel expense report. Similar procedures will be established by each Center to reimburse or provide for official travel of applicants for employment and for official visitors.

Employees of AURA when required to on official business shall be reimbursed for reasonable expenses as defined within this policy in section B.4

B. TRAVEL IN GENERAL

1. Travel at AURA expense must be approved in advance by the AURA President or a designee for Corporate Office personnel, and by the Center Director or a designee as appropriate for Center personnel.

- a. Applicants for Employment

Payment of travel costs for personal interviews of applicants requires advance approval by the President or Center Director, or a designee, as appropriate. For certain positions, payment for family members to accompany the applicant may be authorized in advance by the President, Center Director or a designee.

- b. Others for whom AURA travel may be authorized:

- 1) Guest Investigators/General Observers and Scientists - as authorized by the Director in each case.
 - 2) Guest Investigators/Graduate Students - as authorized by the Director in each case.
 - 3) Summer Visiting Scientists and Summer Research Assistants - travel authorization is implicit in employment.
 - 4) Center Consultants - as arranged for in each case by the appointing authority.
 - 5) Appointees to the scientific, technical or administrative staffs who are recruited from or transferred to locations more than 50 miles from the Center site are authorized to relocate their families and household effects to the site at AURA expense. (See Section D below for details.) The Director or a designee is authorized to act for AURA in arranging these relocations.

2. Mode of Travel

- a. Normal method of air travel is by U.S. commercial airlines, by the most economical airfare available at the time the reservations are made, providing that such reservations do not result in associated additional expense exceeding the sum that would otherwise be saved or that it result in unacceptable delays in the travel schedule. Exceptions will be allowed only when the most economical fare or a U.S. carrier is not available, when significant delays or costs are involved, or in cases involving the health of the traveler. In addition, exceptions involving particularly international travel will be based on expected duration of uninterrupted travel. Except in cases of emergency, use of first class accommodations must be approved in advance by the Director or the President.

- b. Except for trips between Center headquarters and their related remote locations, use of private vehicles for official business trips must be approved in each instance in advance by Center Directors or a designee.

If use of the private vehicle is approved as being more advantageous to the Center, reasonable lodging and meals en route will be paid. The traveler will be reimbursed at the currently authorized rate for the direct distance to point of duty and return to the Center site.

If approval is for convenience of the traveler, travel time in excess of that required by a common carrier will be charged to vacation leave; and meals and lodging en route will not be paid. Reimbursement will be at the most economic airfare available at the time of travel between the same two points.

- c. Unless Company transportation is provided, employees who use their private vehicles between a Center location and its remote location, e.g., Tucson and Kitt Peak, on officially requested AURA business, may be paid the currently authorized rate for direct travel.

For information on rental vehicles, see Section E below.

3. Travel Advances

The employee may request a travel advance when the Travel Request is submitted. An accounting will be made for all monies advanced for travel expenses and any remaining cash will be returned to AURA within ten days after returning from the trip. Travel advances should not exceed expected expenses.

4. AURA Travel Expense Reimbursement Policy

All travel expenditures must be specifically authorized by Center management and must be in accordance with AURA policy. AURA Centers will establish travel policies and procedures that comply with AURA travel expense reimbursement policy cited below and are consistent with the appropriate funding agency rules and regulations.

a. Meals and Incidentals

- 1) Meals and incidental expenses (M & IE) will be reimbursed on a per diem basis in accordance with Government Federal Travel Regulation amount for M & IE. All per diem reimbursement requests should be reported daily when completing the travel expense report.
- 2) Meals & Incidental per diem allowance is a daily payment based on government calculated rates instead of reimbursement for actual expenses. It is separate from transportation (except as noted below, under "Incidentals"), lodging and other miscellaneous expenses and covers taxes and service charges where applicable.
- 3) Meals are defined as expense for breakfast, lunch, dinner and related tips and taxes. They exclude alcoholic beverage and entertainment expenses, as well as expenses incurred for another person.
- 4) Incidentals are fees and tips to porters, baggage carriers, hotel maids or bellhops. Also included are transportation costs between places of lodging or business to places where meals are taken. For current GSA regulations please visit the Federal Travel Regulation site: <http://www.gsa.gov>
- 5) If any meal is provided by anyone other than the traveler, the per diem amount must be excluded from the travel reimbursement request.
- 6) 75% of the per diem rate is allowed for the first and last day of travel. Except as noted in this section it is applied as follows:
More than 12 hours but less than 24 hours your allowance is 75% of the applicable M&IE rate.
When travel is 24 hours or more:
The day of departure is 75% of the applicable M&EI rate.
Full days of travel 100% of the applicable M& EI rate.
Last day of travel 75% of the applicable M&EI rate.

Note: it does not matter what time you depart or return.

- 7) Meals provided by others should not be included with the daily per diem requests. This includes meals provided by a host or included in conference/seminar fees.
- 8) For Continental US per diem rates, please see www.gsa.gov/perdiem or <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/perdiemrates.html>. The breakdown of these rates for breakfast, lunch, dinner and incidentals is found at www.gsa.gov/mie.
- 9) Non-continental US (e.g., Hawaii) and foreign meal expenses will also be reimbursed on a per diem basis. Rates may be found at: <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/perdiemrates.html>
- 10) Typically, meals will not be reimbursed for local travel [less than fifty (50) miles from the employee's place of employment.]

Each AURA center is required to develop procedures for communication, reporting and documenting travel expenses in accordance with this policy. Upon AURA approval, adjustments to per diems are allowable for specific locations. However no per diem may be adjusted higher than the current federally published GSA or federal rate.

Center policy may allow for other exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis as long as these exceptions are approved in advance by Center management, are within allowable federal guidelines and AURA policy, and are well documented as to why the exception is necessary.

b. Conference and Registration Fees

Conference and registration fees must be approved by center management and demonstrated to be necessary and relevant to attendee's position.

c. Lodging

- 1) Reasonable lodging expenses are an allowable cost, subject to the specific rules and regulations of the sponsoring agencies and deemed reasonable by Center management. AURA allows a conference participant to stay in the "conference headquarters" hotel even if other, less expensive, hotels are available.
- 2) Unless a lodging per diem is authorized by AURA in advance, all lodging expenses must be substantiated with an original receipt from the lodging establishment. The receipt must provide sufficient detail for AURA to determine the cost of the room and any other charges included on the bill.

d. Commercial Transportation.

- 1) All AURA travel should be procured at the lowest coach or tourist class services available that meet the specific needs of the traveler. The difference in cost between first-class air accommodations and less than first-class air accommodations is unallowable except when less than first-class air accommodations are not reasonably available to meet necessary mission requirements, such as where less than first-class accommodations would (i) require circuitous routing, (ii) require travel during unreasonable hours, (iii) greatly increase the duration of the flight, (iv) result in additional costs which would offset the transportation savings, or (v) offer accommodations which are not reasonably adequate for the medical needs of the traveler. First or business class rail or air service must be pre-approved by Center Management.
- 2) Recipients of Federal financial assistance funds are required to abide by the provisions of the "Fly America Act". This rule applies even if the cost is higher and the service less convenient. For exceptions to this rule, please see 41 CFR 301-10.138.

e. Automobile Expense

- 1) AURA will reimburse the traveler for actual miles traveled in one's personal automobile, provided that it is associated with a pre-approved travel request and the actual cost does not exceed the lowest tourist or coach commercial airfare.
- 2) Mileage will be reimbursed from the point of origin at the federally approved rate that can be found at:

http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA_BA_SIC&contentId=9646

- 3) AURA may periodically revise its mileage reimbursement rate. In no case will this rate exceed the mileage reimbursement rate set by the Internal Revenue Service.

5. Non-allowable Expenses

- a. Travel insurance;
- b. Entertainment; and,
- c. Personal expenses not related to official business.

C. RELOCATION POLICY

1. Subject to certain limitations and conditions, generally, full-time employees recruited from or transferred to locations beyond a 50-mile radius of the Center may be eligible to receive one-way travel and limited relocation assistance for the employee and

his/her immediate household members. Relocation assistance is not permitted for terms of employment less than one year.

- a. "Immediate household members" are limited to individuals who would be considered an immediate family member and/or those in a relation equivalent thereto, and who share a household with the relocating employee. Eligibility for relocation of immediate household members is at the discretion of AURA and may be limited by immigration regulations. Some aspects of the relocation may be taxable. Please check with your personal tax advisor for more information.
 - b. Pets are not considered part of the household and the employee will be solely responsible for all expenses and arrangements associated with the relocation of his/her pet(s).
2. Each Center is responsible for determining the method of providing relocation assistance. Assistance may be provided either by Center-arranged relocation services or by designating a limited lump sum amount to cover these relocation services. Relocation assistance is intended to provide reasonable assistance with expenses to reduce hardships encountered when employees are moved from one location to another. The assistance is not intended to, nor can it, cover all expenses an employee may incur when relocating for employment purposes. Expenses eligible for relocation assistance will be determined by each AURA Center pursuant to regulation and contract provisions.
 - a. All costs associated with relocations must be incurred within six (6) months of the employee's start date or date of transfer. All receipts must be submitted within 90 days of the physical move in order to be eligible for reimbursement. Exceptions require the approval of the Center Director, or designee. The employee will be reimbursed reasonable and actual expenses for lodgings, meals and incidental expenses in accord with [Section B, Article XXI, paragraph B.4.](#)
 - b. When authorized by the Center Director a relocated employee may receive, separate from other relocation assistance, a lump sum Relocation Payment (RP) subject to any applicable taxes for incidental expenses at the time of the move. This payment is not to be viewed as a benefit to which employees with similar duties and qualifications are entitled and the payment shall not exceed the equivalent of one month of the employee's annual basic pay. The payment is not considered part of the rate of basic pay for any purpose.
3. Relocating individuals will be entitled to shipment of limited household goods from one location to the point of destination. In addition, AURA may pay for movement of authorized household goods into and out of a warehouse and for up to 30 days in transit storage. Insurance on household goods shipments may be provided in the

base moving rate. If insurance is not provided in the base moving rate, any insurance desired by the employee must be purchased at the employee's expense.

- a. AURA reserves the right to refuse to pay for the shipment of items not usually considered part of household effects. An individual relocating should clear all expenses with the Human Resources representative at the appropriate AURA Center before incurring the costs to avoid the risk of an expense being determined as ineligible under the program.
4. A new or transferred employee for whom AURA is paying relocation expenses must agree to reimburse AURA for all relocation-related expenses, including any relocation payment (if applicable), if the employee terminates or is terminated within one year from the date of hire or transfer. That reimbursement is due at the time of termination.
5. Exceptions to this policy may be made by the AURA Center Director.
6. Moves to and from Chile are covered by the [Unique Policies and Procedures Chile document, Section B., XXV.](#)

D. RENTAL VEHICLES

Rental of vehicles must be approved in advance and will be justified on the basis of need to conduct official business and not as a convenience to the employee.

AURA will not reimburse the cost of insurance coverage provided by rental agencies for vehicles rented within the contiguous 48 states as this coverage is already provided by AURA's comprehensive automobile general liability insurance. In all other locations, the optional insurance should be accepted and the cost will be reimbursed.