



NEW HANOVER COUNTY

Administrative Memorandum

County Manager's Office

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Approved By:	Chris Coudriet, County Manager

TRAVEL POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide County employees, managers, and administrators detailed information on the policies and procedures required when traveling on authorized County business when County funds are being used. This policy applies to all County employees, volunteers, interns, Fellows, and appointed boards.

This policy was developed to provide a clear and consistent understanding of the County's definition of business related expenditures so that expenditures incurred while executing official County business when out of town or on a day trip may be reimbursed.

This policy includes specific requirements and guidelines for payment and reimbursement of all allowable authorized travel expenses. The County assumes no obligation to reimburse any expenses that are not in compliance with this policy. Any exceptions or deviations from this policy will require County Manager (or his/her designee) approval before the related expenditure will be reimbursed.

II. ORGANIZATION(S) / INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED

All New Hanover County employees, volunteers, interns, Fellows, and appointed boards

III. DEFINITIONS

Business Travel – Appropriately authorized travel, by an employee, volunteer, intern, Fellow, or appointed board member, deemed necessary to conduct official county business, relating to training sessions, conferences, conventions or other authorized meetings which will provide business value or promote professional development that benefits the County.

Authorized Travel Expenses – Reasonable expenses incurred as part of business travel that are properly documented and consistent with the policies and guidelines contained in the Travel Policy.

County Procurement Card / P-card- County issued credit card provided to certain personnel in order to make purchases of goods and/or services required by County.

IV. TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

The employee’s Department Director or his/her designee is required to authorize all travel requests in advance of the trip, regardless of cost. The authorization is intended to assure that the travel is necessary and that budgeted funds are available to meet all anticipated expenses. No expenses may be incurred prior to receiving all approvals.

Some travel will require additional levels of approval.

Type of Travel	Location	Authorization	Form of Approval
Same Day	In-state or Out-of-state	Department Director and supervisor	Verbal approval
Overnight	In-state	Department Director and supervisor	In writing
	Out-of-state	Department Director and County Manager or appropriate Assistant County Manager	In writing
Any	Outside the continental United States	Department Director and County Manager	In writing

All Department Director level travel must be approved by the County Manager or Assistant County Manager.

Sheriff’s Office employees must receive approval for all travel from their supervisor and the Sheriff (or designee).

V. TRAVEL ADVANCES

In order to not create a financial hardship for employees who are required to travel on official County business, the County will pre-pay and / or advance up to 100% of the estimated travel expenses, so long as total requested advance for expenses is at least equal to the standard daily meal per diem limit. Advances are to be used for those employees who need the funds prior to their travel.

Whenever possible, County Procurement Cards, Purchase Orders, and / or A/P checks should be utilized to pay / pre-pay for transportation, registration and lodging to keep the actual out of pocket expenses requiring an advance as low as possible.

- Travel Advance Limits
 - Minimum:** Estimated expenses are equal to the standard daily meal per diem limit
 - Maximum:** 100% of estimated travel expenses

- NO TRAVEL ADVANCES will be issued for meal per diem for same-day travel trips.

The Travel Authorization Report (TAR), with estimates / documentation for **all trip-related costs and all necessary approval signatures/emails**, must be sent to Finance no less than ten (10) business days prior to the expected departure date if an advance is requested. Advances will be prepared in Finance and electronically deposited in the employee's bank account prior to travel.

The Finance Department will not issue a travel advance if the Traveler has an outstanding advance that has not been reconciled and cleared by a corresponding Travel Expense Report (TER) according to the guidelines. Travelers who are routinely late in submitting travel reconciliations (the travel expense report) will not receive future advances.

VI. TRANSPORTATION

In determining the mode of transportation to be used for travel, the County will pay either the standard mileage reimbursement, the cost of air fare at the coach rate, or other similar fare for other modes of transportation (i.e. rail, rental vehicle, etc.) depending on which is economically reasonable.

The Department Director should determine the most suitable travel mode, based upon factors such as convenience and time. When more than one employee is attending a conference, carpooling is strongly encouraged.

- A. County Vehicle** - County vehicles may be used for any authorized travel. The requesting Traveler must obey all laws of the jurisdiction in which the vehicle is being operated and will be responsible for any parking or traffic violations incurred while using the County vehicle.

The County vehicle should be used in conducting County business only. A minimal amount of personal use, such as driving the vehicle to and from a meal is allowed. If family members accompany travelers on a business trip, a personal vehicle must be used.

Employees are strongly encouraged to use County vehicles when available for same day travel, particularly travel within New Hanover County.

The County has fuel cards for the specific purpose of purchasing fuel for County owned vehicles. These cards must be used with an assigned PIN. Counties receive Federal discount per gallon, as well as, a State discount, if purchased in NC. County Procurement Cards or personal credit cards should not be used to purchase gasoline for a county vehicle.

- B. Rental Vehicles** – The County has contracted with Enterprise Rental for passenger car rental. A general account has been established, allowing all departments to reserve a vehicle without the use of a p-card, personal credit card, or a purchase order. Enterprise will invoice the department after the return of the vehicle. The use of rental cars is encouraged for ALL travel with total mileage greater than 100 miles. Travelers must obey all laws of the jurisdiction in which the vehicle is being operated and will be responsible for any parking or traffic violations incurred while using the vehicle.

- Reservations are to be made by Department Directors or designees only.
- The classes of cars approved by the County that are available for rent include Economy, Compact, and Intermediate. When county employees are carpooling to a travel destination, a bigger rental may be leased for the benefit/comfort of those carpooling/travelling together.
- Refuse Loss/Collision Damage Waiver (LDW) and Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) for domestic business travel. Since the County provides insurance for business rentals, the traveler will not be reimbursed if they purchase this coverage.

If family members accompany travelers on a business trip, a personal vehicle must be used.

C. Personal Vehicle – If a personal vehicle is used, it is the responsibility of the owner of the vehicle being used for County business to have customary automobile liability insurance coverage including medical payments, for their own protection and that of their passengers. If the traveler drives a personal vehicle, his insurance policy covers vehicle damage and any expenses incurred in an accident.

Reimbursement for miles traveled in a personal vehicle will be at the maximum rate allowed by the IRS, which is updated annually on the first day of January.

- Any County employee who receives an automobile allowance is NOT eligible for in-county mileage reimbursement.
- When a private vehicle is chosen for travel, only the owner of the private vehicle is to be reimbursed the applicable mileage rate. The same guidelines for determining allowable mileage as used by IRS will be used by the County.
 - Mileage from home to a place other than your normal place of work should be calculated net of your regular commuting mileage (from home to work).
 - Travel from home to work is NOT allowable mileage, unless the employee is in a call-back status.
 - Voluntary travel to the on-site Health Clinic or to a wellness program event for personal benefit is NOT allowable mileage.
- To process a reimbursement request, mileage with appropriate descriptions of travel incurred, business purpose and destination must be noted either in MUNIS ESS or in a Travel Expense Report (TER). If a Travel Expense Report is used, a printed map with estimated miles from one of the internet map providers will be sufficient documentation of miles driven.

If the traveler chooses to drive a personal vehicle greater than 400 miles one way instead of flying to a destination, reimbursement for the use of the personal vehicle (including any additional lodging costs, meal and incidental expenses and parking necessitated by this mode of travel) shall not exceed the coach airfare rate to the destination plus any additional costs that would have been incurred as a result of air travel.

THE COUNTY WILL NOT REIMBURSE TRAVELERS FOR PARKING TICKETS, FINES FOR MOVING VIOLATIONS OR VEHICLE TOWING CHARGES.

D. Air Travel - Air travel should be arranged and tickets purchased, after receiving all necessary authorizations for the trip, as early as possible to assist in keeping costs at a minimum. Airline flights must be booked at no more than the coach fare rate. Air travel may be booked via an airline direct or with an on-line discount broker, such as Expedia or Orbitz.

If a flight reservation is changed or cancelled and results in additional fees, a written explanation approved by the Department Director must be provided. If the change is **not** County related, the employee will be responsible for the additional fee unless an emergency occurs and is approved by the Department Director and County Manager.

The County will pay one baggage fee each way when traveling by air. The traveler should retain the E-ticket, internet receipt, or boarding pass and the receipts for the baggage fees, report the amounts on the Travel Expense Report (TER) and attach the receipts as documentation to show that the expenditure was actually incurred. The employee will be responsible for additional fees, including any overage fees for excess weight.

E. Other Travel Transportation/Parking Fees - Ground transportation includes trains, airport shuttles, buses, and taxis and is authorized when incurred while out of town on County business. Ground transportation includes travel to/from the airport and hotel, travel to/from hotel and location of business/conference/meeting, and travel to/from hotel and restaurant, etc.

Parking charges and tolls will be reimbursed. Receipts are required and will be reimbursed at actual costs.

VII. MEALS

To be eligible to receive a payment of the meal per diem, traveler must be in travel status. Travel status occurs when an employee incurs over 50 miles of one way of travel from his/her New Hanover County office to arrive at his/her business destination.

Meals will be reimbursed using the per diem rate per the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and will be updated annually each January.

In the event that the per diem allowance needs to be prorated to reflect times that the Traveler is not in travel status, the per diem allowance will be based on the GSA per meal allowance. The following schedule guidelines will be used to determine the per diem allowance for that day:

Breakfast:	Depart prior to 7:00 a.m.
Lunch:	Depart prior to 11:00 a.m. and/or return after 2:00 p.m.
Dinner:	Return after 7:00 p.m.

No receipts are required for per diem reimbursements that comply with these guidelines. Tips for meals, vending machines, and snacks are included in the per diem meal allowance rate and are not reimbursable.

No travel related meals should be charged to a County Procurement Card, unless special circumstances have been approved by the Finance Director.

Employees will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages and alcoholic beverages **SHOULD NOT** be charged to the county procurement card.

A. Same Day Travel Meals

- IRS regulations state that meals claimed for non-overnight trips are to be reported as taxable income. Therefore, meal reimbursements for same day travel will be reimbursed to the employee via the payroll system, and will be reported with taxable wages.

B. Overnight Travel Meals

- When a meal is provided as part of a conference or meeting, or included with lodging (hotel), including continental breakfast, per diem will not be paid for that particular meal, regardless if the employee chooses to eat that meal or not.
- Room service is discouraged and must be paid by the traveler with their personal funds at the time of check out. Room service meals may not be charged to a County Procurement Card.

VIII. LODGING

Reimbursement of hotel/motel costs shall be for the traveler only, at the single room rate (unless sharing with another County employee).

Travelers are expected to use good judgment and fiscal prudence when making reservations. It is recommended that when attending conferences and conventions, travelers should use the discounted hotel rates offered by the conference organizers for conference attendees. If an employee chooses not to stay at the conference hotel, the employee will only be reimbursed up to the conference rate and should choose comparably priced hotels.

Whenever possible, travelers should utilize discounts available to them, such as the government employee rate offered by many hotels. Reimbursement of lodging will be based upon submission of the official hotel receipt showing all charges and payments and must show a zero balance due.

Normally, reservations made with a credit card will guarantee a late arrival. Travelers may request a direct payment of one night's lodging as a deposit to the hotel if the employee does not have a credit card. If the traveler cancels the reservation, it is the traveler's responsibility to ensure that the room reservation is cancelled in compliance with the cancellation terms established by the hotel, and obtain prompt refund of any deposit made by the County.

When two (2) or more County employees share a room, all room expenses shall be on one (1) employee's travel expense report. The Travel Authorization Report (TAR) and Travel Expense Report (TER) should reflect a notation in the comment box stating employees shared lodging to document the overnight stay.

If a traveler chooses to arrive at the location of the training the night before it begins, the County will not pay the lodging expense if it is within 100 miles from his/her County office or the traveler's home whichever is closer and if the conference begins at 10 a.m. or later.

IX. CONFERENCE / CLASS REGISTRATION FEES

Registration fees may be paid in advance using the Procurement Card or with an A/P check once the appropriate Travel Authorization approval has been received. If registration fees will exceed \$1,000, submit a copy of the Travel Authorization Report (TAR) to the procurement division of Finance for Finance to lift controls to allow payment.

Conference or seminar registration fees paid onsite should be reported on the Travel Expense Report (TER) with the receipt for the payment attached.

X. OTHER EXPENSES

A. Internet - Hotel internet connection charges related to conducting County business are reimbursable. The traveler should include the expenditure on the Travel Expense Report (TER), identify the charge and indicate the business purpose on the hotel bill submitted with the Travel Expense Report.

B. Telephone - Any business-related calls will be reimbursed at actual cost, including the telephone connection fee charged by the hotel/motel, with the submission of a detailed listing of calls and associated fees.

C. Dry Cleaning - The County will reimburse up to \$10.00 for dry cleaning services or laundry services for trips exceeding five working days. A receipt must be provided.

D. Miscellaneous

- Tips for valet parking, concierge, baggage handling, etc., will be at the traveler's expense.
- Personal entertainment (e.g. movie rentals, etc.) will be at the expense of the individual traveler.
- The county recognizes that county residents receive benefits by providing county employees the opportunity to participate in various conference events that provide value in their role as representatives/employees of the county. Any additional event cost not included in the base registration fee must be easily justifiable and benefit the county within the duties of those attending the event.
- Any other required business related expenditure will be reimbursed at actual cost. Receipt and justification must be submitted.

XI. TRAVEL ACCOMPANIED BY NON-EMPLOYEES

A traveler may be accompanied by a family member or companion on a County authorized

travel at their own expense.

- The traveler is responsible for allocating only his/her portion of actual costs on the Travel Expense Report (TER).
- The traveler is only responsible for any incremental cost of the hotel/motel room if the accommodation was modified from the single rate due to the attendance by the companion.

Non-County business associates may accompany County employees in County vehicles when they have a business interest in the purpose of the trip.

- Costs should be shared and split accordingly.
- Only employees of New Hanover County are authorized to drive a vehicle owned by or rented by New Hanover County.

XII. CANCELLATIONS

In the event of cancelled travel, all efforts must be made to eliminate related expenses. It is the traveler's responsibility to cancel the lodging reservation, registration and any other travel plans.

- The traveler should request and record the cancellation number for lodging in case of billing disputes. If the traveler fails to cancel the reservation, a written explanation for the failure to cancel is required with approval by the Department Director.
- The employee may be held personally responsible for no show fees if they fail to take appropriate action to cancel the travel plans. In the event of accidents, serious illness or death with the traveler's immediate family, or other critical circumstances beyond the control of the traveler, the County may elect to pay the penalties and charges.

Any travel advance received for travel that is cancelled must be paid back to the County immediately.

XIII. INTERNAL CONTROLS

For this policy to function effectively, there are certain responsibilities that the individuals who use the policy must assume:

1. Out of town, over-night travel related to conducting County business or attending a seminar is a privilege. Therefore, the traveler should exercise good judgment when incurring travel expenses and use County funds prudently.
2. When two or more travelers are traveling to the same destination, they should make every effort to use special group travel discounts and jointly use transportation including taxicabs and carpooling in county-owned, rented or privately owned vehicles.

3. Department directors should ensure that individuals traveling on behalf of the County are aware of, and will abide by, this policy and the related procedures.
4. The Supervisor, Department Director, or County Manager approving the travel should ensure that: 1) the trip is necessary; 2) business value will be derived from it; 3) funds are available in the budget account identified; and 4) expenses charged by the traveler are reasonable and reported accurately.
5. The Finance Department will reimburse travel expenses that have been approved as reasonable, are appropriately documented, and are within the guidelines of this policy.
6. A traveler must refund the County for any funds that have been reimbursed directly to the traveler by grant funds or third party reimbursements. The traveler is responsible for obtaining the reimbursement due to the County.
7. Petty cash may not be used to support travel or travel reimbursements.

If an employee of the County is authorized funds for travel and violates the written policies herein, the Finance Director shall, unless the violation is corrected or satisfactorily explained, report the violation to the County Manager. In the case of the County Manager, the matter may be further referred to the Board of Commissioners.

XIV. OTHER

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and will be updated periodically, as needed.