

Hertford County Travel Policy



TRAVEL POLICY

HERTFORD COUNTY

I. Policy Statement

This policy is to ensure that public funds are expended for travel only when it serves a public purpose. Article V, Section 2(1) of the Constitution of North Carolina requires that funds generated by taxation be spent for a public purpose only. The County is committed to minimizing travel costs while providing a reasonable balance between the needs of the county and the needs of those traveling on county business.

II. Purpose

This policy serves as a guideline to all departments in Hertford County for establishing procedures for reimbursement of the cost of authorized travel subsistence. It also provides assurance to employees that everyone is treated equally.

III. Applicability

Employees, boards and/or commission officials that travel on county business are subject to this policy.

IV. Responsibility

An employee or board member traveling on official business is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds. North Carolina G.S. 159-181(a) states that any officer or employee of a local government or public authority who submits a written claim or approves a claim for funds that he/she knows to be false is guilty of a misdemeanor. Excess costs, circuitous route, luxury accommodations, and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are not acceptable under this standard. Employees and board members will be responsible for unauthorized costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience. Willful violations of this policy may result in dismissal from county employment or other disciplinary action.

V. Definitions and General Guidelines

- A. Authorizing Party — An individual authorized by this policy to approve or disapprove requests for travel, travel reimbursements, etc.
- B. Duty Station — "Duty station" is defined as the job location at which the employee spends the majority of his or her working hours. For an employee in travel status, the duty station should be the point where traveling begins the majority of the time (home or office). The designation of an employee's home as the duty station requires prior approval from the Department Head.

- C. Non-County Employees — Non-County employees traveling on official business whose expenses are paid by the county are subject to this policy, including subsistence allowances, to the same extent as County employees.
- D. Registration Fees — Registration fees may be paid by the employee and then reimbursed or paid directly by the county. These fees are charged to "training expense." The department must require itemization and documentation of expenses. Payment of charges for registration for out-of-state conferences must be approved by the department head in advance.
- E. Reimbursement — All reimbursement requests shall be filed for approval and payment after the travel period ends for which the reimbursement is being requested. "Travel period" is defined as the calendar month during which the travel occurred.
- F. Requesting Party — The person who will be reimbursed for travel costs incurred while conducting county business.
- G. Subsistence (Meals & Lodging) — Subsistence is an allowance related to lodging, meal costs and gratuities thereon.
- H. Transportation — Transportation expenses include personal automobile, taxi, bus, train, airplane, auto rentals, tolls, and parking fees. All travel expenses must be incurred by and for employees and board members while conducting official county business in order to be eligible for reimbursement.
- I. Travel — Travel is defined as going to and from the normal job location to a site located more than 10 miles from the normal job location to conduct county business. Authorization of travel requests will be based upon need and cost/benefit of travel as determined by the authorizing party. All travel costs except airline tickets, lodging (under most circumstances) and registrations will be paid directly to the vendor, and will not be billed to the county. In many cases, it is customary for airline tickets and registrations to be paid directly by the unit either in advance or billed to the unit by invoice later. The requesting party is encouraged to use travel agents and reserve transportation and lodging in advance when possible. The requesting party should travel with other employees and officials of the County and representatives of other government units when possible. The requesting party will be reimbursed for actual costs incurred only, subject to the limitations established in this policy.
- J. Meals — Balanced combination of nutritious foods is what the County will reimburse. Nonfood items are not reimbursable. This includes but not exclusive alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, etc.

VI. Travel Procedure

- A. In-State Travel — For all in-State travel, the department head is responsible for determining that a sufficient unexpended appropriation remains in the department travel budget to reimburse all expected costs of travel. A travel authorization form will be submitted by the requesting party to the department head for authorization of travel at least fifteen working days prior to the date upon which travel will commence. If the department head is the requesting party, the form should be submitted to the County Manager (see special form). Travel for department heads receiving less than 7 days of notice shall notify the county manager, assistant county manager or finance director respectively for approval. If the said administrative officials are unavailable, notify the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners.
- B. Out-of-State Travel — Out-of-State travel status begins when the employee leaves the State and remains in effect until the employee returns to the State. However, In-State allowances and reimbursement rates apply when employees and other qualified official travelers use hotel and meal facilities located in North Carolina immediately prior to and returning from out-of-State travel during the same travel period. Out-of-State travel requests by employees will be approved by the County Manager in addition to the department head. The travel authorization form will be submitted to the County Manager no later than fifteen working days prior to the date travel will commence. All air travel should be approved at least twenty days or greater in advance. See section IV, A1 for detail explanation.
- C. Meals
1. The following schedule shall be used for reporting allowable expenses incurred while traveling on official County business:

	<u>In-State</u>	<u>Out-of-State</u>
Breakfast	\$ 9.00	\$ 15.00
Lunch	12.00	20.00
Dinner	<u>20.00</u>	<u>30.00</u>
	\$41.00	\$ 65.00

2. In-State travel per diem is \$41.00. If in-state per diem is less than \$50.00 bring a receipt when submitting for travel reimbursement
3. Out-of-State travel per diem is \$65.00.
4. The County will not reimburse you if you exceed these amounts. Request for per diem must be 15 days prior to the day of travel on a pay cycle, otherwise your per diem will be paid upon return with the approval of authorizing person.

D. Reimbursement

Each employee and board member is responsible for his or her own request for reimbursement. Time of departure and arrival must be listed on the reimbursement request.

1. Daily Travel (Overnight) - Employees and board members may receive allowances for meals for partial days of travel when the partial day is the day of departure or the day of return:
 - Breakfast — Depart duty station prior to 6:00 a.m.
 - Lunch — depart duty station prior to 10:00 a.m. (day of departure). Return to duty station after 2:00 p.m. (day of return).
 - Dinner — Return to duty station after 8:00 p.m. If stopping for dinner would cause the employee to return after 8:00 p.m., when he/she would otherwise have returned before 8:00 p.m., dinner will not be reimbursed.
2. Daily Travel (Not Overnight) — Allowance shall not be paid to employees for lunches if travel does not involve an overnight stay. To be eligible for allowances for the breakfast and evening meals, employees must:
 - Breakfast — depart duty station prior to 6:00 a.m. and extend the normal workday by two hours.
 - Dinner — return to duty station after 8:00 p.m. and extend the normal workday by three hours.
 - To be eligible for both meal allowances, the employee must have worked five hours longer than the normal work day. The travel must involve a travel destination located at least 45 miles from the employee's regularly assigned duty station.
3. Reimbursement for Meals — Required Employee Attendance — A County employee or board member may request reimbursement for meals, including lunches, when the job requires his/her attendance at the meeting of the board, commission, committee, or council in his/her official capacity and the meal is preplanned as part of the meeting for the entire board, commission, committee, or council. However, when your meal is not included in the function then it's non- reimbursable.

E. Lodging

1. Authorization — Employees must obtain written approval from the department head or designee in order to qualify for reimbursement for

overnight stays. An overnight stay, for single and half-day meetings, is not justified unless the following criteria are met:

- The mileage radius is 160 miles or more.
- The conference, class, meeting, and or training begins prior to 8:30 a.m. and the travel meets the 160-mile radius or greater.
- The above criteria do not apply to multi-day conferences, meetings and classes.

Supervisory personnel certifying the reimbursement request as necessary and proper must require documentation from the traveler to substantiate that the overnight lodging was necessary. The prior night stay is at your expense, if it deems feasible that you could leave at a reasonable hour and can be on time for the event.

2. Reimbursement — Each employee is responsible for his or her own request for reimbursement. Requests for reimbursements must be filed within 30 days after the travel period ends for which the reimbursement is being requested. Specific dates of lodging must be listed on the reimbursement request and substantiated by a receipt from a commercial lodging establishment. Allowance for lodging should be kept to a minimum. However, when lodging is held in the same place, the county will approve and reimburse based on this cost. Other entertainment expenses such as the costs of movies included in the bill for lodging will not be reimbursed.

3. Tips — Are not reimbursable.

F. Lodging - Other Costs

1. Telephone Calls

- Long distance — Employees and board members are not allowed to charge long distance phone calls to the County for calls made of personal nature.
- Reimbursement — Official phone calls (back to your office) are reimbursable if made between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- Emergency Calls — Employees and board members may be reimbursed for a personal long-distance call if such a call is of an emergency nature as determined by the department or finance officer. An example may be a call made when an employee calls home to inform someone that the travel period has been extended beyond original plans due to unforeseen reasons.

VII. Specific Guidelines Relating to Transportation, Subsistence and Other Costs

A. Transportation

1. Common Carrier — Actual coach fare (substantiated by receipt) will be reimbursed. First class travel should be used only in extraordinary circumstances. Penalties and charges resulting from the cancellation of airline reservations (or other travel reservations) shall be the County's obligation if the employee's travel has been approved in advance and the cancellation or change is made at the direction of and for the convenience of the County. If the cancellation or change is made for the personal benefit of the employee, it shall be the employee's obligation to pay the penalties and charges. However, in the event of accidents, serious illness or death within the employee's immediate family, or other critical circumstances beyond the control of the employee, the County will be obligated to pay the penalties and charges.

If an employee elects to drive his personal vehicle for out-of-state travel, that employee will be reimbursed at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) standard mileage rate per mile or the rate of a round-trip airline ticket, whichever is less.

Super Saver Rates — When traveling by common carrier to conduct official County business, employees traveling to their destination earlier than necessary and/or delaying their return to avail the County of reduced transportation rates may be reimbursed subsistence for additional travel days if, in the opinion of the department head, the amount saved in transportation costs due to the early and/or delayed travel is greater than the amount expended in salary and additional subsistence. Prior written approval of the department head is required.

B. Personal Vehicle

A requesting party may use his/her personal vehicle for travel and be reimbursed only if one of the following conditions is met:

1. The use of a County vehicle is not practical or available.
2. The requesting party needs a specially equipped vehicle

The allowable rate per mile will follow the IRS standard mileage rate and will be paid to an employee who uses his/her personal vehicle.

Actual mileage is reimbursable mileage, measured from the duty station to the destination and necessary travel needed to complete the job i.e. hotel to meeting location (and return)

Parking fees, tolls and storage fees are reimbursable. Receipts are required in order to be reimbursed. Reimbursement of expense for airport parking is limited to 96 hours, with a receipt required. Airport parking expenses in excess of 96 hours may be reimbursed in extraordinary circumstances if advance approval is obtained from the authorizing party.

C. Rental Vehicle

Rental vehicles are to be used as a last resort. Use of a rental vehicle must be approved in advance by the County Manager.

D. Commuting

1. No reimbursement shall be made for the use of a personal vehicle in commuting from an employee's home to his/her duty station.
2. Reimbursement for travel between the employee's or board member's duty station and the nearest airline terminal and for appropriate parking is reimbursable at private vehicle rate.

E. Unit Vehicles

County vehicles may be used for any authorized travel. The requesting party must obey all laws of the jurisdiction in which the vehicle is being operated. The vehicle will be used in conducting business only. A de minimis amount of personal use, such as driving the vehicle to and from dinner, may be allowed. Otherwise, all county vehicles should be left on the county's property. Non-County employees may accompany County employees if they have a mutual business interest in the travel. Use of a county vehicle must be requested and approved by the County Manager on a first come basis. Vehicles are not allowed to be taken home without approval by the County Manager.

F. Credit Cards

A County credit card may be supplied to a department upon request. Request for more than one credit card per department must be approved by the County Manager. The credit card should be used for room reservations and emergencies only. Each charge will be reviewed to determine if it is an appropriate expenditure of the County. Unacceptable charges will be the responsibility of the user to reimburse the County. Detailed documentation must be provided by the person using the credit card to support expenditure.

G. Gas Credit Cards

When driving a County vehicle, it will be filled at the County's pump. Upon your return, if any gas is purchased, employee will be reimbursed for actual purchase price for gas and not by the County's mileage rate.

VIII. Authorization for Reimbursement Procedures

A. Submitting expense reports

1. A requesting party will complete a reimbursement form and attach receipts for expenses requiring them, and submit it to the finance office.
2. A requesting party submitting a falsified reimbursement form will be subject to disciplinary action or criminal prosecution. An authorizing party who approves a falsified reimbursement form that they know to be false will be subject to disciplinary action or criminal prosecution. Violations of the County's travel policy may result in dismissal from County employment.

B. Approval and processing of reimbursement requests

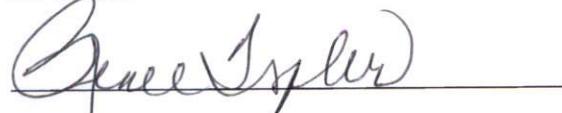
1. Reimbursement requests will be submitted to the authorizing party for approval. After approval by the authorizing party, the form should be forwarded to the Finance Director based on the accounts payable pay schedule.
2. The Finance Director will determine that the reimbursement form has been properly approved, that it is mathematically correct, and that requested reimbursements agree to submitted receipts and are within the limits set by this policy. If an error in the reimbursement requests is found, the error will be corrected before payment is made.
3. Before the reimbursement is made, the Finance Director will determine if there are sufficient funds to pay the request. The Finance Director will immediately inform the authorizing party and the requesting party if payment cannot be made.

Adopted this the 3rd day of January, 2023



Andre M. Lassiter, Chairman
Hertford County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:


Renee Tyler, Clerk to the Board