

Travel Policy FAQs for Local Workforce Development Boards

1. What is the statutory basis for travel reimbursement rates for employees working at the local workforce development boards?

Section 112.061, Florida Statutes

Section 445.007, Florida Statutes

2. Who do the limits on travel reimbursement rates apply to?

This policy applies to state employees (jointly managed staff) and local workforce development board staff. This policy does not apply to:

- ***Funds that do not flow through state agencies (e.g., direct federal funding or unrestricted funding)***

3. What is the monetary limit on what can be spent on a hotel room under the new law that applies to conferences, conventions, or meeting travel sponsored or organized by a state agency?

The monetary limit is \$175/night base excluding any taxes or additional mandatory fees that are charged by the hotel.

4. Does the \$175/night restriction include amounts paid for taxes, assessments or other fees?

No, the room rate restrictions only apply to the base nightly rate for the room and do not include additional taxes or miscellaneous daily fees charged by the provider of the lodging, unless the fees would normally be included in a hotel stay. An example of a fee that should be included in the base nightly rate is a fee for cleaning the hotel room.

5. What if two people share a room that is over \$175 per night?

If the room is shared by two people and the rate is more than \$175 per night, then the cost is split between the two people and is allowable as long as the cost per person is \$175 or less.

6. What will happen if the actual cost of the accommodation exceeds the \$175/night estimate given on the Travel Authorization?

Lodging expenses may not exceed the \$175/night rate, unless the traveler's rate is a negotiated group rate discount or the traveler provided at least three comparable alternatives demonstrating that lodging at or under the required rate is not available. Documentation

supporting justification of a nightly rate exceeding \$175/night must be maintained with the travel reimbursement. The traveler will be personally responsible for the repayment of any expenditures that exceed the approved \$175/night if the traveler cannot prove that the most economical hotel rate was used by providing three comparable alternatives or that the rate is a negotiated group rate discount. The traveler will be liable for any amount over the nightly threshold in addition to any additional taxes incurred due to the overage amount. This unauthorized amount will either be reduced from the travelers travel reimbursement or be requested in the form of a check if no reimbursement is due the traveler.

7. Are there exceptions to this rule?

The lodging restrictions do not apply to travel activities for conducting business external to the agency including but not limited to audit, investigation, litigation or examination. However, where daily room rate for these activities exceed \$175/night, travelers are reminded that the most economical use is required in all situations.

This new limit does not apply to travel activities undertaken for law enforcement purposes, military purposes, emergency response activities or public health activities.

8. My program is federally funded, will I still be required to adhere to the limits set by the State Chief Financial Officer?

Yes, The State Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has the authority to regulate all funds disbursed from State Accounts. All Federal dollars are deposited into a State Account regardless of their source and ultimately disbursed from State accounts. These funds are therefore the responsibility of the State CFO and subject to the requirements of state law.

9. What is the statutory basis for mission critical travel?

The policy is authorized in Chapter 2020-114, Laws of Florida. Agencies were made aware of the official change in policy via Department of Financial Services Agency Memorandum #3 2020-21 on July 6, 2020 (see attached).

10. Who is subject to the mission critical travel policy?

This policy applies only to state employees. Individuals who are paid directly from DEO with a State Payroll Warrant are required to adhere to the new travel regulations. This includes jointly managed staff even though the travel is paid from pass thru funds. This policy does not apply to:

- ***Funds that do not flow through state agencies (e.g., direct federal funding or unrestricted funding)***
- ***Local workforce board staff.***

11. How long will the mission critical travel policy be in effect?

The policy remains in effect July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

12. What is considered mission critical travel?

Travel that is consistent with the Executive Director's Determination Memo #DEO MCT 2019-20 (see attached). Determination Memo #DEO MCT 2019-20 should be retained with the travel voucher for monitoring.

13. Should justification for mission critical travel be submitted to DEO prior to travel?

In-State Travel: No. Justification demonstrating that travel is consistent with the Executive Director's purposes.

Out-of-State Travel: Yes. Justification demonstrating that travel is consistent with the Executive Director's Determination Memo #DEO MCT 2019-20 should be submitted to Michelle Harvey at michelle.harvey@deo.myflorida.com.

14. Do I need to complete a travel authorization prior to any type of travel?

Yes, the completion of the Travel Authorization Request (TAR) prior to the beginning of travel becomes even more critical with the adoption of these new limitations. The TAR will be maintained at the LWDB level as part of the required documentation. LWDBs do not need to use DEO's travel form but must retain adequate documentation with the travel voucher file.

15. How should travel be handled for jointly managed staff?

Travel should be documented to demonstrate that it was reasonable and necessary to fulfill job responsibilities.

16. Who can I call if I have questions regarding this Q&A?

Tisha Womack, Chief, Bureau of Financial Management
Caroline.Womack@deo.myflorida.com

850-245-7126

DATE: July 6, 2020

TO: Agency Addressed (No. 03, 2020-2021)

FROM: Paul Whitfield, Director
Division of Accounting and Auditing
Department of Financial Services

SUBJECT: TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED BY CHAPTER 2020-114, LAWS OF FLORIDA.

This memorandum supersedes Agency Addressed Memorandum No. 2, 2019-2020 and provides guidance on the travel restrictions imposed by Chapter 2020-114 Laws of Florida.

Each travel voucher or other attached documentation must contain a statement describing how the travel activity is critical to the agency's mission.

For any travel voucher that seeks payment for travel to foreign countries, other states, conferences, staff-training activities, or other administrative functions, the voucher must contain evidence of the agency head's determination that such travel activities are critical to the agency's mission.

In order to make this process more efficient, each agency head may provide a signed memorandum setting forth his or her determination as to the types of activities that he or she deems mission-critical that require travel to foreign countries, other states or the District of Columbia, conferences, staff-training activities, or administrative functions. A copy of the determination memorandum can be sent to the Bureau of Auditing with a request to keep on file otherwise a copy should be included with each voucher that seeks payment for travel activities falling within any of these five categories.

In approving any travel as being mission-critical, each agency head or his or her designee must identify in writing how the travel is consistent with the agency head's determination memorandum and state that he or she has considered the use of teleconferencing and other forms of electronic communication as an alternative to the travel. This section does not apply to travel for law enforcement purposes, military purposes, emergency management activities, or public health activities.

In addition, each travel voucher or Purchasing Card charge that seeks payment for lodging associated with a meeting, conference, or convention organized or sponsored by an agency may not exceed the traveler's daily room rate of \$175. For clarification,

- an agency is deemed to have sponsored a meeting, conference, or convention if they contributed money for the meeting, conference, or convention. Money provided for a traveler's registration fee or for an Agency's membership fee to the organization hosting the conference or convention is not deemed as sponsorship.

- an agency is deemed to have organized a meeting, conference, or convention if they are involved in selecting the location or planning the activities to be conducted.
- for purposes of this section, a meeting does not include travel activities for conducting an audit, examination, inspection, investigation, or travel activities related to a litigation or emergency response.

To minimize the impact to employees, managers need to verify compliance with lodging rate restrictions before authorizing the employee to incur travel expenses. An employee will be required to expend his or her own funds for any daily room rate that exceeds the \$175 per day restriction, plus associated taxes.

The lodging restrictions do not apply to travel activities for conducting business external to the agency including but not limited to audit, investigation, litigation, or examination. However, where daily room rate for these activities exceed \$175, travelers are reminded that the most economical use is required in all situations. Travelers should be prepared to justify costs that appear excessive pursuant to the Reference Guide for State Expenditures.

<https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/AA/Manuals/documents/ReferenceGuideforStateExpenditures.pdf>.

Please call the Bureau of Auditing at (850) 413-5512 if you have any questions.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2019

TO: Department of Financial Services
Bureau of Accounting and Auditing

FROM: Ken Lawson
Executive Director 

RE: Determination of Mission Critical Travel (MCT) – *Memo #DEO MCT 2019-20*

Activities as outlined below may be deemed mission critical travel for the Department of Economic Opportunity for Fiscal Year 2019-20:

Section 1. Foreign Travel

Foreign Travel is defined as any travel outside of the fifty states of the United States and the District of Columbia. On a case-by-case basis, only the Executive Director may approve a request for foreign travel.

Section 2. Conference and Convention Travel

Travel to a conference or convention may be approved under this memorandum if it meets one of the below mission critical conditions.

- A. Department attendance is for a Department presentation at the conference.
- B. Department attendance is required to allow input into the formulation of rules, regulations or policy proposals relevant to Department functional activities.
- C. Department attendance is required due to agency membership as part of a national or regional governmental or professional organization.
- D. Department attendance is required by a federal cognizant agency for grant programs that are administered by the Department.

Section 3. Out of State Travel

Travel to the District of Columbia or any state other than Florida may be approved under this memorandum if it is for one of the below mission critical purposes.

- A. To represent the Department at a national or regional governmental or professional function that relates to the Department's responsibilities as the administrative agency for Federal Workforce and Reemployment Assistance Programs as provided in Chapters 414, 443 and 445, Florida Statutes.

- B. To represent the Department at a national or regional governmental or professional function that relates to the Department's responsibilities to facilitate economic development, recruit new businesses and promote expansion of existing businesses in this state as provided in Chapters 20 and 288, Florida Statutes.
- C. To represent the Department at a national or regional governmental or professional function that relates to the Department's responsibilities to administer state and federal grant programs and provide community development and project planning to maintain viable communities, revitalize existing communities and expand economic development and employment opportunities under Chapters 20, 163, 189, 288 and 380, Florida Statutes.
- D. To receive job specific training, education or instruction that relates to programs administered by the Department.

Section 4. In State Travel

Travel within Florida may be approved under this memorandum if it is for one of the below mission critical purposes.

- A. For any of the purposes outlined in Section 3 above.
- B. To conduct staff training, site visits, monitoring/auditing or other internal administrative functions.
- C. To provide technical planning and assistance to local governments and employers.
- D. To collaborate with DEO partner entities, including CareerSource Florida, Local Workforce Development Boards, Enterprise Florida, VISIT FLORIDA, Space Florida, The Defense Support Task Force, Florida Sports Foundation, and the Institute for Commercialization of Public Research.
- E. To conduct external audits, investigations, litigation and examinations.
- F. In response to an emergency declared by the Governor

Only on a case-by-case basis, activities not specifically addressed by this memo may be deemed mission critical by the Executive Director.
