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Collaboration for Success

Travel Q & A

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TOPICS TO COVER

- Comptroller's Update
- Determining Travel Status and Official Station
- Travel in Proximity of Home or Official Station
- Per Diems
- Miscellaneous Expenses
- Transportation
- Taxable Travel
- BSC/SFS

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COMPTROLLER'S UPDATE

- Unreconciled Charges
- NET Card/CTA Account
- Only Traveler's charges on their card
- Non-employees cannot be issued T-cards or go through T&E
- Plate Pass

COMPTROLLER'S UPDATE - QUESTIONS

Question:

The individual travel card may not be used for personal expenses or other traveler's expenses – is this correct?

Answer:

The OSC Travel Manual states that the travel card must only be used for business related expenses. OGS's policy states "All T-cards are assigned to an individual State employee and the associated travel expenses charged to the card will be only for that employee."

COMPTROLLER'S UPDATE - QUESTIONS

Question:

Are travelers required to reimburse for improper charges?

Answer:

OSC's Travel Manual states that inappropriate charges should be reimbursed. When the inappropriate charge is reconciled, the traveler should use an expense type of "Non Reimbursable Expenses".

COMPTROLLER'S UPDATE - QUESTIONS

Question:

If an employee does not have a card but must travel, what is OSC's recommendation?

Answer:

OSC's expectation is all employees that travel should be issued cards. If the employee does not have a card, a travel advance could be given out of the agency's advance account.

DETERMINING TRAVEL STATUS

- Must be 35 miles away from home AND Official Station
- Official Station –
  - "Usual work location"
  - In the best interest of the State
  - Cannot be reimbursed for travel between home and official station

TRAVEL IN PROXIMITY OF HOME OR OFFICIAL STATION

- Reimbursement for transportation allowed for:
  - home to an alternate work location (See “Lesser of” rule)
  - between the official station and an alternate work location (paid actual mileage)
  - between alternate work locations (paid actual mileage)
  - an alternate work location to the employee’s home (See “Lesser of” rule)
- Lesser of Mileage Rule
  - must be reimbursed using the lesser of
    - mileage between the employee’s home and the alternate work location, or
    - mileage between the employee’s official station and the alternate work location

TRAVEL IN PROXIMITY OF HOME OR OFFICIAL STATION - QUESTIONS

Question:

A traveler has an official station in NYC, but lives in Long Island. He is traveling by LIRR to his alternate work site in the city, 2.9 miles from his official station. Is the traveler eligible to claim the LIRR to come in to NYC?

Answer:

No, using the lesser of mileage rule, the traveler is only entitled to claim the mileage from his official station to the alternate work location.

PER DIEMS

- General Rules
  - Rates are based on city or county where lodging is obtained
  - Per Diems go Dinner – Lodging – Breakfast
  - Extra meals
    - Breakfast – 1 hour before normal start time
    - Dinner – 2 hours after normal end time
  - If meals are included in a registration fee, traveler is not entitled to meal per diems for the provided meals

PER DIEMS

- Overnight Travel – Method 1
  - Flat rate for meals, lodging and incidentals
  - No receipts required
  - Extra meals are $5 for breakfast and $12 for dinner (if entitled)
- Overnight Travel – Method 2
  - Reimbursement of actual lodging costs and an allowance for meals based on federal reimbursement rates
  - Receipts for lodging required
  - Extra breakfast is 20% of the meal per diem
  - Extra dinner is 80% of the meal per diem

OVERNIGHT PER DIEM - QUESTIONS

Question:

There are international rates which appear to be incorrect in SFS – why is this?

Answer:

International rates change on a monthly basis. However, SFS is only update once a year with new rates. Therefore, travelers must use the correct per diem rate (found on the US Department of State website) and change the per diem amount on their expense report to match. (GFO Chapter XIII.4.E)

OVERNIGHT PER DIEM - QUESTIONS

Question:

A traveler's official station is Albany, NY and their work location is in NYC. When traveling to Albany for business, the traveler is claiming Method 1 (unreceipted) reimbursement for lodging at their residence in Saratoga Springs. Would the traveler be entitled to reimbursement for lodging at his residence in Saratoga?

Answer:

The traveler would be entitled to the unreceipted per diem amount. We consider the traveler's "home" to be where he stays when working at his official station.

OVERNIGHT PER DIEM - QUESTIONS

Question:

An employee is lodging in NYC ($267.00 per diem). They have a quote of $186.12 that includes tax. They were told if the hotel were to give State rate and not charge tax it would cost more. Is the $186.12 acceptable because it is in the best interest of the State?

Answer:

The $186.12 is acceptable because it is less than the GSA per diem for the area.

OVERNIGHT PER DIEM - QUESTIONS

Question:

An employee is scheduled to travel to Chicago for two one-week trainings on back-to-back weeks. Can that employee stay in Chicago over the weekend, rather than return Friday and fly out again Monday? Would meal allowances be allowed?

Answer:

This is a decision which should be made prior to traveling. As long as it is cost beneficial to the State for the employee to stay in Chicago (hotel + per diems) then the hotel and pre diem costs for the employee to stay would be allowed. If the traveler is more than 300 miles away, they may be entitled to additional reimbursement per their union agreement.

OVERNIGHT PER DIEM - QUESTIONS

Question:

An employee travels to NYC for an overnight, then travels to Ithaca the following day and returns home that night. The employee is eligible for an extra dinner. What rate would they be entitled to – NYC or Ithaca?

Answer:

The employee would be entitled to the dinner portion of the NYC per diem. The travel manual states "In these cases, breakfast and/or dinner will be reimbursed up to the maximum amount of the meal per diem allowance specified for the particular area of lodging."

OVERNIGHT PER DIEM - QUESTIONS

Question:

What is considered "reasonable" when asking travelers to seek per-diem lodging, especially when going to a conference and all local hotels have jacked up their rates? Should this be documented and turned in?

Answer:

Per the OSC Travel Manual, travelers may be unable to find a hotel at a rate that does not exceed the maximum federal lodging per diem rate for the location of travel. If that occurs, travelers must obtain prior approval from his/her finance office to exceed the federal rate.

PER DIEMS

- Day Trips
  - Breakfast – 1 hour before normal start time
  - Dinner – 2 hours after normal end time
  - Without receipts
    - $5 breakfast
    - $12 dinner
  - With receipts
    - Reimbursed up to the full the meal per diem

MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

OSC does not require receipts for miscellaneous expenses under $75

- Allowable - tolls, bridges, tunnels, reasonable parking, taxis, local bus, subway, telephone, internet, baggage transfer & storage, supplies & materials
- Not allowable - speeding fines, parking tickets, laundry, valet, entertainment, personal charges

Note: This is OSC's policy – at a minimum, this must be followed. Agencies are welcome to make stricter policies and require more receipts.

TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

- Should be the most efficient and cost effective method of transportation available.
  - Factors to consider:
    - distance being traveled
    - travel time
    - number of travelers
    - number of locations to be visited
    - type of transportation available
    - employee salaries and overtime

TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES - QUESTIONS

Question:

A traveler will be flying from Buffalo, NY to Islip, NY for business meeting. The traveler will then drive from Islip, NY to State College, PA (for personal pleasure). How much can the traveler be reimbursed to come home?

Answer:

The traveler would be reimbursed up to the amount transportation would have cost had the traveler not extended the trip for personal reasons.

TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES - QUESTIONS

Question:

Is it against OSC policy to charge gas to the corporate credit card when traveling on state business with a personal vehicle?

Answer:

The OSC Travel Manual states "Charges for gasoline, oil, accessories, repairs, depreciation, anti-freeze, towing, insurance and other expenditures will not be allowed. These are considered operational costs and are covered in the mileage allowance."

TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES - QUESTIONS

Question:

An employee is assigned to an alternate work assignment located in NYC, less than 35 miles from home and official station. The employee takes the bus to Grand Central Station, then takes taxi to the alternate work location. Is employee eligible for any transportation expenses?

Answer:

Per the travel manual, for travel within 35 miles of home and official station agency management has the discretion to establish a reimbursement policy that provides for reasonable reimbursement of transportation expenses in excess of the amount calculated under the "lesser of mileage rule."

TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES - QUESTIONS

Question:

An employee rented a car at Enterprise and paid with his personal credit card. They would not accept the tax exempt certificate and stated their policy is to only credit sales tax when the traveler is using a state travel card. Is this correct?

Answer:

Enterprise should accept personal checks and personal credit or debit cards for tax exempt status within New York State together with the properly completed AC-946 Tax Exemption Certificate.

TAXABLE TRAVEL

- Per diem amounts paid in excess of the rates allowed by the federal government which are not supported by receipts
- Meal allowances paid for non-overnight travel or day trips
- Mileage reimbursements in excess of the maximum federal rate
- Reimbursement for expenses incurred at a single location when the job assignment is realistically expected to last in excess of one year

TIMELINESS OF EXPENSE REPORTS - QUESTIONS

Question:

Is there any hope that OSC will put a drop dead date on when Travel expenses can be submitted for reimbursement? For example, a person must submit moving expenses reimbursement within a year from the date of hire and is not accepted one day later…can we do something like this to travel reimbursement?

Answer:

The NYS budget language allows for travel to be reimbursed out of current year appropriations regardless of when the travel occurred. There are no current OSC plans to limit the length of time for travelers to submit expense reports, however we would expect the agency to only approve expense reports which can be proven to be correct due and owing.

DUE STATE - QUESTIONS

Question:

When an expense report reflects that reimbursement is "Due State," who monitors to confirm that the state actually receives the reimbursement from the employee? What is the timeframe allowed for the employee to make the reimbursement? What steps are taken if the employee does not reimburse the state within the given timeframe?

Answer:

Per the GFO, employees are required to submit a check where an Expense Report results in a Due State amount. The check must be submitted to the Business Unit when the Expense Report is created in the SFS. It is the BSC's responsibility to notify the traveler that there are funds due to the State and to monitor and follow-up with the traveler (dunning letters) when the funds are not paid back timely. Any disciplinary actions or active collections – holding paychecks, etc. are the responsibility of the traveler's agency.

AUDITING - QUESTIONS

Question:

Now that the BSC conducts the auditing of expense reports, who does the OSC hold responsible to ensure travel guidelines are followed and employees do not receive improper reimbursement?

Answer:

At all levels of approval, the person signing off is acknowledging that it is correct per their review. Therefore the responsibility lies with all those who approve or submit expense reports, and a process should be created, documented and followed by all.

NOTIFICATION - QUESTIONS

Question:

A lot of our travelers (who are signed up for direct deposit) would like to be notified when their travel and personal reimbursements are deposited into their bank accounts. Is there any hope that OSC would send an e-mail notification to the employee when reimbursement is made?

Answer:

There are no current plans for this, but the system does have the functionality to do this. It would require a lot of work on both SFS and the agencies part to enable, and would need to be initiation through agency requests (probably through the T&E User Group.)

TRAVEL AGENT - QUESTIONS

Question:

The travel agent services contract expired 8/31/14. We are still using our travel agent but can you update on the status of that OGS contract?

Answer:

Per OGS, NYSPro is currently evaluating bids received from the Travel Management Services RFP, the bid opening was 8/28/14. NYSPro intends to award the contract soon.

QUESTIONS?

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