

HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS
ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES MANUAL

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Supersedes:	04/04/2006

5. AUTHORIZATION FOR OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

- a. Out-of-state travel shall be kept to a minimum.
- b. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) must approve all out-of-state travel before any reservations and/or travel are made (except for mandatory travel such as transportation of detainees and investigations). **Form T-1 "Application for Out-Of-State Official Travel"** must be submitted to the DBM in order to justify the need to travel out-of-state.
- c. The County is not obligated to pay for travel if prior approval from the Department of Budget and Management is not obtained.

6. METHOD OF PAYMENT FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES

- a. Direct Payment - The County Auditor's Office may pay registration fees, hotel, and airline reservations directly to vendors. The request for payment must be received with sufficient time for the check to be processed by the County Auditor's Office - Accounts Payable Section (at least two weeks prior to the date the check will be needed).
- b. Department's Travel Card - If request for payment is not received within the time specified above, the Purchasing Department should be contacted in order to request that payment be made through the Department's travel card (see Travel Card procedures).
- c. Traveler's Personal Credit Cards and/or Cash - Travel expenses incurred by employees and officials while conducting County business may be paid through personal credit cards and/or cash. The employee or official will be reimbursed by the County for reasonable and allowable expenses in accordance with this Policy upon completion of the travel and submittal of a properly filled **Form T-4 "Final Travel Expense Claim"**. The County will not reimburse interest, over the limit, and late charges, incurred in a personal credit card by the traveler.
- d. Travel Advance - The employee or official may also receive a travel advance subject to certain restrictions (see Section 16).

7. COORDINATION OF TRAVEL

- a. "Coordination of travel" in this Section means County employees traveling together in a personally owned vehicle, County vehicle, or leased motor vehicle.

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- b. Coordination of travel is required when two, three, or four County employees employed by the same County department travel on the same dates with the same itinerary to conduct the same official County business. If more than four County employees employed by the same County department travel on the same dates with the same itinerary to conduct the same official County business, then coordination of travel is required for each group of four employees and for any fraction in excess of a multiple of four employees.
- c. When coordination of travel is required, reimbursement will only be made to the driver of the personally owned vehicle (mileage) or leased motor vehicle (fuel charges). Mileage incurred by a County employee to meet at a location or to pick up other County employees may be reimbursed. This mileage must be reasonable and documented in detail (see Section 9).
- d. Coordination of travel, however, is not required if the County Official determines before travel that coordination of travel is not feasible. That determination may be based only on factors relating to official County business. Determinations should be made on a trip-by-trip basis and must be provided in a written memo to the County Auditor's Office – Accounts Payable Section. If the County Auditor's Office determines that the rationale for the determination was not related to official County business, the reimbursement will only be made to one of the travelers.

8. AIR TRAVEL

- a. The most economical airfare should be obtained (only coach fare will be allowed). If travel more expensive than coach fare is obtained, the fare must be paid with the traveler's funds and the difference between the coach fare and the fare obtained will not be reimbursed to the traveler. Refundable fares should be considered if possibility of a trip cancellation exists. Commercial airlines are normally the most economical mode of transportation for out-of-state travel. Airline tickets should be reserved in advance, when possible, in order to obtain the most reasonable rates. The use of a travel agency to book air travel reservations is discouraged.
- b. Airline tickets purchased with the department's travel card must be reserved through the Purchasing Department (see Travel Card Procedures) and be related to travel expenses for County employees.
- c. Package fares (Friends Fly Free, etc.) are encouraged when two or more County Officials or employees are traveling to and from the same location and overall cost can be reduced.