

Guidance for Travel on Sponsored Funds

Overview and Key Concepts

When utilizing sponsored funds to pay for travel, there are many issues to consider in addition to the Washington University travel policy. Sponsored Projects Accounting (SPA) reviews travel submitted via travel reports, travel advances and procard documents for compliance with the Washington University Travel policy as well as the applicable agency and federal guidelines. This document is meant to be a reference for charging travel to sponsored funds.

Guidelines

GENERAL TRAVEL ITEMS

- Travel on sponsored funds should be tied to the overall aims of the project. Per the Uniform Guidance, for federal funds, participation of the individual must be necessary to the federal award being charged and the costs must be reasonable and consistent with the non-federal entity's established travel policy (see UG 200.474 travel costs). Travel charged to sponsored funds should not be for professional development (i.e. travel to conferences that benefit the general knowledge base of the individual in their professional area of expertise but not necessarily benefiting a specific aim of a specific project).
- Personal travel must not be charged to a sponsored fund and should be separately and specifically accounted for to ensure that only the business related portions of a trip are charged to the sponsored fund.
- Alcohol is not allowable on sponsored funds.
- Travel Advances (TA) should be used to reimburse WU faculty/staff for travel expenses (airline tickets, room deposits...) that are paid in advance by the WU employee. Check Requests (CR) should not be used to reimburse employees for travel related expenses. TA's that are requested by the traveler to cover out-of-pocket expenses during the trip will not be approved more than 30 days prior to the trip start date. CRs may be utilized to pay vendors directly for registration fees or deposits if it is being made payable directly to the vendor.
- The traveler must include all travel expenses paid by procurement card transactions including RP#'s on their Travel Expense Statement. TA's associated with the trip should be pulled from the travel list into the on-line Travel Report (TR). The supplemental procurement card expense form should be attached to all SPA Travel Expense Statements as a best practice and SPA may require receipts for procurement card transactions in certain situations when necessary. You can find the RP supplemental form at the following link:
http://cashandcredit.wustl.edu/university_card_programs/Procurement-Card-Expenses-Supplemental-Form.xls

- Foreign exchange rates must be clearly documented by including a copy of a print screen showing the average exchange rate for the period (can be obtained from www.oanda.com) or by including a credit card statement that shows actual conversion rates. All receipts must be clearly labeled in English (i.e. hotel, rental car, taxi, food).

MEALS

- Individual meal charges over \$50 appear to be excessive on a sponsored fund. If the cost of one meal exceeds this amount, the sponsored fund should be charged the \$50 and the remaining amount may be reimbursed from other funding source funds, per the department's policies. In certain instances, the traveler may provide, and Sponsored Projects Accounting will consider, a written justification as to why the entire amount should be allowed.
- When including meals for individuals other than the traveler, the names of the individuals as well as the relationship to the grant should be well documented with justification for how the individual relates to the grant and why the meal should be charged to the grant. In the case that the individual(s) are WU employees, please cross-reference to the other employee's TR number in the shared docs section of the on-line trail doc as well as on the hard copy of the Travel Expense Statement.

RENTAL CAR

- Rental car upgrades and auto insurance purchased from the rental company are normally not allowed on sponsored funds. If appropriate, provide justification as to why an upgrade is necessary. WU Employees and students traveling for University business are covered when renting a car under the University's Insurance Policy; therefore, additional auto insurance should be declined. See Insurance website for details: <http://insurance.wustl.edu/travel-vehicles/vehicle-insurance/Pages/Rental-Vehicles.aspx>. Non-WU Employees are not covered under our insurance policy and may elect to purchase rental car insurance.
- International Note – when traveling outside of the USA and Canada it is recommended that WU travelers purchase the rental car insurance. International rental car insurance is allowable to charge on a sponsored fund

AIRFARE

- Use screen prints to document a situation in which you have to book a flight that is NOT in compliance with the travel policy.
- Airfare change fees are rarely allowed on SPA funds and require detailed justification for unlike/unusual circumstances. Change fees will be reviewed by SPA on a case by case basis for compliance with A-21 and Uniform Guidance. Additional airfare charges associated with changing a flight are also not allowable unless sufficient justification is presented and approved.

- Baggage fees charged by the airlines are allowable charges to sponsored fund. These are mandatory fees imposed on all travelers checking baggage.
- Flights should not be booked based on an individual's frequent flyer program affiliation. Flight options should be well researched and the most economical option should be purchased and reimbursed from sponsored funds.
- Expedia, Travelocity, Kayak, etc. are great research tools to find the lowest cost airfare. It is recommended to use them to research the available options and then to book directly through the specific air carrier. Note – It is highly suggested that discount travel websites are not used to book international travel. Code share agreements are not always transparent and even when it appears to be a flight booked correctly on a US flag air carrier that might not be the airline that actually is paid. See the Fly America FAQ for more information.
- Upgrades are not allowable on sponsored funds. This includes, but is not limited to, upgrades in class, early-bird check in, priority access seating, upgrades for preferred seats, etc. NOTE – “Anytime”, “Senior” and “Business Select” airfare on Southwest Airlines are upgraded fares and are considered upgraded fares and are not allowable on sponsored funds.
- US flag air carriers must be utilized for foreign travel on federal grants and contracts unless the flight qualifies as an exception under the Fly America Act. When using non-federal funds, US Flag Air carriers do not have to be used.
- If a foreign air carrier must be utilized for the trip, please refer to the Fly America Act, Open Skies Agreements or the sponsoring agency's guidelines to determine if/when this is allowable. Contact SPA prior to booking the airfare if there is any question about this issue. Additional guidance on the Fly America Act and Open Skies can be found on the SPA website.
- Open Skies Agreements provide an exception to the Fly America Act. Please refer to the Open Skies Guidance document on the SPA website.
- Exceptions – there are many exceptions that arise when booking travel. If you have a travel situation that might qualify for an exception, print screens should be obtained to document the facts at the time of booking.
- If a flight is booked and does not meet the criteria for charging to a sponsored fund, the cost of the flight may be limited to a comparable flight found at the time of reimbursement or may not be allowable on the sponsored fund at all depending on the situation. It is best to research, compare and document at the time of booking to avoid costly mistakes at the time of reimbursement.