



MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Operating Policies & Procedures Manual

University Operating Policy/Procedure (“OP”)

OP 70.01: Travel Authority and Definitions

Approval Authority:	President
Policy Type:	University Operating Policy and Procedure
Policy Owner:	Vice President for Administration and Finance
Responsible Office:	Business Office
Next Scheduled Review:	09/01/2028. This OP will be reviewed in October every three (3) years, or as needed, by the Vice President for Administration and Finance and forwarded to the President as needed.

I. Purpose

The purpose of this OP is to set forth legislative travel regulations from the General Appropriations Acts of the Texas Legislature and the policies of Midwestern State University (“MSU” or “University”), a component institution of the Texas Tech University (“TTU”) System.

II. Definitions

- A. *Cancellation Charge* - A fee, charge, or payment that a provider of travel services assesses or retains because of the cancellation or change of a travel reservation or other travel plan.
- B. *Commercial Lodging Establishment* - A motel, hotel, inn, apartment, house, or similar entity that furnishes lodging to the public for pay. [A person or establishment that provides lodging for pay that the comptroller determines to have a sufficient number of the characteristics of a commercial lodging establishment for the purposes of the [Travel Regulations Act](#).] **TTU’s OP does not include the bracketed language**
- C. *Commercial Transportation Company* - A company or individual that transports people or goods at a cost.
- D. *Contiguous United States* - The District of Columbia plus the 48 mainland U.S. states. Alaska and Hawaii are the only states not included.
- E. *Designated Headquarters* - The area within the boundaries in which the employee's place of employment is located.

- F. *Duty Point* - The destination other than a place of employment an employee travels to conduct state business.
- G. *Gratuity/Tip* - Something given voluntarily or beyond obligation, usually in response to or in anticipation of a service. **[g. in TTU's OP]**
- H. *Incidental Expense* - An expense incurred while traveling on official state business. The term includes such expenses as a mandatory insurance or service charge, [and an applicable tax,] and a resort tax, except it does not include a tax based on the cost of a meal [or State of Texas tax]. Expenses for meals, lodging, or transportation, personal expenses, tips and gratuities are not incidental expenses. **[h. in TTU's OP and does not include the bracketed language]**
- I. *International (Foreign) Travel* – Travel outside the United States, including U.S. possessions, Canada, and Mexico. Prior approval by the President or designee is required. Employees must follow MSU OP: 70.07: *International Travel*, and the [US Department of State per diem rates](#) when seeking reimbursement for international travel. **[not in TTU's OP]**
- J. *Lease* – A contract with a term of at least one month that gives the lessee possession and use of property or equipment while the lessor retains ownership. **[i. in TTU's OP]**
- K. *Lodging Expense* - A charge imposed by a provider of lodging as consideration for providing the lodging. The term does not include money paid as a donation, gratuity, or tip to the establishment. **[j. in TTU's OP]**
- L. *Meal Expense* - The cost of a meal plus any tax that is based on the meal's cost. The term does not include a tip, a gratuity, or a mandatory service charge paid or imposed in conjunction with a meal. **[k. in TTU's OP]**
- M. *Non-working Hours* - All hours in a calendar day, *except* working hours. **[l. in TTU's OP]**
- N. *Official Mileage* – The mileage on official travel, including mileage to and from out-of-town destinations, as well as point-to-point mileage within cities visited. All official mileage is based on the shortest routes possible, which should include farm-to-market roads. The [Official State Mileage Guide](#) shall determine mileage reimbursement rates. **[m. in TTU's OP; not in ASU's OP]**
- O. *Official Travel* –Travel [of MSU employees] approved by the University [to conduct official state business]. **[n. in TTU's OP and does not include the bracketed language]**
- P. *Official Travel Status* – The time between leaving designated headquarters for official travel and returning to designated headquarters from official travel. **[o. in TTU's OP and does not include the bracketed language]**
- Q. *Per Diem Allowance* – The actual cost of meals and lodgings, not to exceed the daily maximum allowed by the State of Texas for in-state or out-of-state travel. **[p. in TTU's OP; not in ASU's OP]**
- R. *Pre-Approval* - A Request for Travel Authorization (RTA) form is MSU's method of requiring travelers to acquire prior approval for expenses related to travel before

- they are incurred. (See OP 70:02: Authorization for Official Travel) **[not in TTU's OP]**
- S. *Prospective State Employee* - An individual who a state agency is considering for employment. **[q. in TTU's OP and does not include the bracketed language]**
- T. *Rented or Public Conveyance* - A motor vehicle, train, boat, bicycle, or aircraft that an employee rents or pays a fare to use for a period of less than one month. **[r. in TTU's OP]**
- U. *Resort Fee* - A mandatory fee that a guest may be required to pay at a commercial lodging establishment in addition to the daily room rate. The fee is typically charged to all guests for the right to access various amenities at a hotel such as swimming pools, exercise facilities, daily newspaper delivery, printing of boarding passes and local telephone calls. May also be called a facility fee, a destination fee, an amenity fee, or a resort charge. **[not in TTU's OP]**
- V. *State Agency* – A unit of state government that uses appropriated funds to pay or reimburse a travel expense of a state employee. **[s. in TTU's OP; not in ASU's OP]**
- W. *State Employee* - An individual employed by a [state agency](#), including a [key official](#) **[t. in TTU's OP adds: "..., unless the travel allowance guide specifically provides otherwise.]"** The term also includes prospective state employees.
- X. *State Travel Card* – A charge card contracted by the state used by the employee to charge University business-related travel expenses. A state travel card is issued in the name of the individual employee, who is responsible for payment of all charges. **[not in TTU's OP]**
- Y. *Transportation Expense* – A charge related to the cost of transportation, e.g., private auto, commercial airline, taxi, etc. **[u. in TTU's OP and not in ASU's OP; note: this is in addition to its definition for travel expense, which ASU's OP includes]**
- Z. *Travel Expense* – Transportation, meal, lodging, or incidental expenses incurred while traveling on official travel. **[v. in TTU's OP]**
- AA. *Travel Voucher* – The **[accounting]** document used to reimburse a state employee for travel expenses incurred during the discharge of official state business. **[w. in TTU's OP and includes bracketed language in red but not the bracketed language in black]**
- BB. *Work Day* - A day on which **[a particular state]** employee is regularly required to conduct **[official]** state business. **[x. in TTU's OP and includes bracketed language in red but not the bracketed language in black]**
- CC. *Working Hours* - The hours during which **[a state]** employee is regularly scheduled to conduct official state business. **[y. in TTU's OP and includes bracketed language in red but not the bracket language in black]**
- DD. *Travel Advance* – Employees who do not have a travel card may request a cash advance for travel along with the Request for Travel Authorization (RTA) form. A travel voucher must be completed to substantiate the travel expenses paid with a

travel advance. Any excess funds from an advance must be returned to the Business Office as soon as the employee returns from the trip.

III. Policy/Procedure

A. Authority

The following rules were developed under the authority of the [Texas Government Code Chapter 660, General Appropriations Act, Article IX, Part 5](#), and [Texas Administrative Code, Title 34, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Section 5.22](#).

B. Responsibility of Agency and Employee

1. Agency Responsibility

- a. A state agency, like MSU, may pay or reimburse a travel expense only if the purpose of the travel clearly involves official state business and the travel is consistent with the university's legal authority. The travel voucher must explain the nature of the official state business conducted and specify the benefit that MSU gained from the travel.
- b. MSU shall minimize the amount of travel expenses paid or reimbursed by making sure that each travel arrangement, including meals, lodging, transportation, and incidental expenses, is the most cost-effective considering all relevant circumstances (Per [Texas Government Code Section 660.007](#). To reduce travel costs, MSU shall use interactive television, videoconference technology, and telephone conferences whenever possible.
- c. MSU shall also follow the travel requirements set forth in:
 - (1) [2 CFR Part 220](#)
 - (2) [49 U.S.C. 40118](#)
 - (3) [Internal Revenue Code §§1.62-2](#)
 - (4) [General Appropriations Act, Article IX, Part 5](#)
 - (5) [Texas Administrative Code Rule § 5.22](#)
 - (6) Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA) [Texttravel](#) website

2. Employee Responsibility

- a. A state employee shall ensure that her/his travel complies with applicable state and federal laws, [Texttravel](#), and any policies adopted by MSU. Failure to comply will result in a delayed payment or reimbursement or a rejection of the employee's travel voucher. (MSU's failure or inability to instruct a state employee does not excuse or justify the employee's failure to comply with applicable laws or rules.)
- b. Employees can view the [MSU Business Office](#) website for information on travel guidelines and helpful hints.

- c. Travelers are responsible for compliance with state and University record retention requirements.
- d. On the Request for Travel Authorization (RTA) form, travelers must include a benefit statement that provides a clear business purpose for the trip and how the trip benefits MSU.
- e. If attending a conference, the full name of the organization must be included (no abbreviations or acronyms) along with a detailed conference agenda listing dates and times for all sessions and any meals included in the registration, if applicable.
- f. Coordination of travel must occur when two or more state employees employed by the same state agency travel on the same dates with the same itinerary to conduct the same official state business.
- g. An employee shall pay all of his/her *single* share of expenses while traveling.
- h. An employee may receive reimbursement only for his/her own expenditures. Reimbursements for expenditures incurred by other individuals are not allowed.
- i. A state employee may not seek payment or reimbursement of a travel expense that the employee knows or reasonably should know is not reimbursable or payable.
- j. An employee may not seek payment or reimbursement for travel expenses that the employee did not incur. Receiving free transportation or lodging in exchange for mileage or points does not constitute an expense.
- k. Per [Texas Penal Code Section 39.02 \(d\)](#), a discount or award given for travel, such as frequent flyer miles, rental car or hotel discounts, or food coupons, are not things of value belonging to the government due to the administrative difficulty and cost involved in recapturing the discount or award for a governmental entity. Travelers are responsible for providing airlines, travel agencies, and other travel vendors with their information to obtain such miles, discounts, or coupons.
- l. Employees must promptly reimburse MSU when travel reimbursements exceed allowable amounts and/or amounts actually incurred. Examples of overpayments would include: excess funds from a travel advance when actual travel expenses are less than the amount advanced before the trip or a reimbursement that exceeds the amount the employee may receive under applicable law, [Textravel](#), MSU's policies, or the amount of travel expenses actually incurred. Failure to reimburse the state for an overpayment or claiming reimbursement for travel expenses the employee did not incur may result in future travel being suspended or discipline up to and including termination.
- m. It is the employee's responsibility to verify if they are on hold with the Comptroller's Texas Identification Numbering System ("TINS") and resolve the hold prior to traveling and incurring travel related expenses. MSU is

unable to reimburse an employee if the employee is on hold in the TINS until the hold is released. (Note: Possible reasons an employee may be on hold include being in default on a student loan, indebted to the state or a state agency, delinquent on state tax, not paying child support, or owing a reimbursement for unemployment taxes.)

C. General Provisions

1. Employee Travel

- a. Employees shall make off-campus trips only after obtaining approval from the appropriate designated administrative official(s) in accordance with established procedures.
- b. Employee travel must not interfere with the employer’s primary academic or administrative responsibilities, and the travel must contribute to the mission of the University.
- c. MSU may reimburse an employee for travel expenses up to one day before and one day after official business begins to ensure traveler attendance at an event if approved by the appropriate designated administrative official. Exceptions may be granted when additional travel days are required to qualify for discount airfares or when travel to the duty point reasonably requires more than one day.
- d. A state agency may reimburse a travel expense incurred by another state agency’s employee if approved in advance and the employee incurred the expense while providing services to the reimbursing agency.

2. Authority to Approve Travel

The traveler’s supervisor will approve the travel expenses; however, the following officers and administrators have the authority to authorize and approve all employee travel within their area, except foreign travel. Foreign travel, including Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. territories, as well as travel to Washington D.C. must be approved by the President’s Office, as noted in MSU OP 70.07: International Travel, provided that such travel contributes to the University’s mission and follows current travel regulations.

These officers and administrators may further delegate their authority:

- a. Chancellor
- b. President
- c. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- d. Vice President for Administration and Finance
- e. Vice Presidents
- f. Deans

- g. Director of Athletics
- h. President's Office for all-foreign travel, including Canada and Mexico

D. Eligibility of Funds for Travel Purposes

1. Prior to submitting a Request for Travel Authorization (RTA) please verify funding is available for all FOAPAL's being used to cover the travel expenses.
2. Employees traveling on official business may be reimbursed for travel expenses paid from grant funds, but are expected to comply with provisions of the grant, University policy, and any state and/or federal regulations.

E. Contracted Travel Vendors

To provide timely and efficient travel services and generate cost savings to state agencies, the State of Texas legislation requires that the [State Travel Management Program \(STMP\)](#) contract with travel vendors. Please see MSU OP 70.02: Authorization for Official Travel *Authorization for Official Travel, OP 70.02(2)* for more information.

1. Airfare
2. Lodging
3. Rental cars

Names and rates of current contracted travel vendors for airfare, lodging and rental cars are available on the [MSU Business Office](#) or [STMP](#) websites.

F. Fly America Act

The Fly America Act mandates the use of U.S. flag air carriers when travelling internationally on federal funds. The Fly America Act Waiver Checklist (linked below) must be used by departments to determine and document whether air travel qualifies for a waiver of these restrictions. The completed checklist must accompany all travel vouchers for trips outside the contiguous United States using federal funds. In the event it is determined that the appropriate air carrier was not used, the expense may be denied or must be transferred to non-sponsored or non-state appropriated funds.

G. Employees with Disabilities

Disabled employees may be reimbursed for attendant care expenses for travel. The attendant's travel expenses are subject to the same rules as employee.

An explanation outlining the disability and the need for any additional accommodating expenses must be attached to the travel expense report.

H. International Travel

All international travel, which includes Canada and Mexico, must be approved in advance by the President, regardless of the funding source ([See International Travel, OP 70.07](#)).

The Texas Governor's [Executive Order GA-48](#)—as amended and/or codified—and TTU System Regulation 07.16.4 (Foreign Adversaries - Gifts and Travel/Policy – Personal Travel) requires University and TTU System employees to submit a pre-travel notification and post-travel brief outlining details of any personal travel to a country on the U.S. Department of Commerce's foreign adversaries list under [15 C.F.R. § 791.4](#). Those traveling to any country listed as a foreign adversary therein must (1) complete a pre-travel notification prior to travel, and (2) complete a post-travel brief and submit to the designated University officer no later than seven (7) days after returning from the trip. To comply with this law, MSU personnel must complete the FOREIGN ADVERSARY NATIONS TRAVEL FORM, linked [here](#). **I. Travel to Washington D.C.**

MSU employees who travel to Washington, D.C. must obtain prior approval from the President's Office on the RTA form.

J. Reimbursement Time Limit

Please make every effort to submit your travel expense report for reimbursement as soon as possible after incurring the expenses to ensure that the designated funds are utilized and reimbursement occurs within the appropriate reporting period. Travel vouchers submitted late may be processed as payroll reimbursements and subject to all applicable tax withholdings, reducing the amount of the travel reimbursement. (See OP 70:05: Reimbursement of Travel Expenses, section II.B.6).

Link: [Fly America Act Waiver Checklist](#)

IV. Related Statutes, Rules, Policies, Forms, and Websites

Federal

[49 U.S.C. 40118](#)

[Internal Revenue Code §§1.62-2](#)

[2 CFR Part 220](#)

State

[General Appropriations Act, Article IX, Part 5](#)

[Texas Government Code Chapter 660](#)

[Texas Penal Code Section 39.02 \(d\)](#)

[Texas Administrative Code, Title 34, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Section 5.22](#)

[Executive Order GA-48](#)—as amended and/or codified—requiring University and TTU System employees to submit a pre-travel notification and post-travel brief outlining details of any personal travel to a country on the U.S. Department of Commerce's foreign adversaries list under [15 C.F.R. § 791.4](#).

TTU System

Regents' Rule 07.09 (Travel authorization, reimbursement, and institutional regulations)

Link: [Fly America Act Waiver Checklist](#)

TTU System Regulation 07.16.4 (Foreign Adversaries - Gifts and Travel/Policy – Personal Travel)

Link: [FOREIGN ADVERSARY NATIONS TRAVEL FORM](#)

MSU

- MSU OP 70.02: Authorization for Official Travel
- MSU OP 70.03: University Paid Expenses
- MSU OP 70.05: Reimbursement of Travel Expenses
- MSU OP 70.07: International Travel
- MSU OP 70.08: Student Travel

[State Travel Management Program \(STMP\)](#)

V. Responsible Office

Contact: Business Office
 Phone: (940) 397- 4104
 Email: bus.office@msutexas.edu

VI. Revision History

____ 202_ : Adopted and approved by MSU President Stacia Haynie as Operating Policy/Procedure (“OP”) 70.01: Travel Authority and Definitions.

Stacia Haynie, President
 Midwestern State University

Date Signed: _____