



MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Operating Policies & Procedures Manual

University Operating Policy/Procedure (“OP”) OP 70.02: Authorization for Official Travel

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 September every three years, or as needed, by the University Controller and the Director of Purchasing and Contract Management, with recommended revisions forwarded through the Vice President for Administration and Finance to the President as needed.

I. Purpose/Reason

The purpose of this OP is to set the policies and procedures governing the approval process for employees of Midwestern State University (“MSU” or “University”), a component institution of the Texas Tech University (“TTU”) System, requesting official travel status and to provide information to employees regarding vendors contracted by the State of Texas to provide travel services, as negotiated by the Comptroller of Public Accounts Texas Procurement and Support Services (“TPASS”). This OP also outlines procedures relating to compliance with the travel program regulations.

II. Definitions

Refer to MSU OP 70.01: Travel Authority and Definitions for MSU, Section II.

III. Policy/Procedure

A. General

The approval process for official travel is activated by the submission of the Request for Travel Authorization (RTA) form to the Business Office. The RTA form is available on the [Business Office webpage](#). The RTA must be completed and submitted for all official travel, regardless of the funding source and amount of travel.

B. State Travel Management Program (“STMP”)

1. Employees shall make off-campus trips only after obtaining approval from the appropriate designated administrative official(s) in accordance with established procedures. The STMP has negotiated travel contracts for airline fares and hotels. When on official travel, MSU employees must use the contracted rates when travel is funded by state appropriated funds, unless one of the noted exceptions apply (see section B.4 below).
2. When renting a vehicle, employees should refer to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts website, STMP – Car Rental Contract to determine if the rental company is a state contracted agency.
3. STMP requires that state agencies use a state travel credit card to purchase all airfare when using state-appropriated funding. Travel services for lodging, rental vehicles, and other necessary travel expenses shall be charged to a state travel credit card, when feasible. ([Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\), Section 20.413](#))

Details of the contracted agencies and applicable rates may be found at [STMP website](#).

For rental cars, STMP has contracted with the following vendors:

- a. [Avis Budget Group, Inc.](#);
- b. [Enterprise Rent-A-Car/National Car Rental](#);
- c. [The Hertz Corporation](#)

Please refer to the [Business Office website](#) for MSU's state rate discount code for each contracted rental company.

The STMP also has also contracted travel agency services, and the use of these services is optional for the university. More information about travel agency services can be found on the [Business Office website](#).

4. Exceptions:

The contracted travel services should be used as required, unless one of the following conditions exists:

- a. Travel is part of a group program or conference for which reservations must be made through a specified source to obtain a specified rate or service.
- b. A contract travel vendor cannot provide services in the time required to accomplish the purpose of the travel.
- c. A contract hotel is not available in a location that will reasonably allow the traveler's business requirements to be fulfilled.
- d. A contract hotel, airline, or rental car company cannot provide the required services because it is sold out or it does not offer services in the city being visited.

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- e. Alternative rental car or hotel arrangements can be made at a lower total cost than the contract hotels or rental car companies. Note: For rental cars, the total costs should include the base rate, loss/damage waiver or liability insurance protection, mileage charge, taxes, and surcharges. For hotels, the cost of the guest room, less taxes, shall be used to compare total costs.
- f. A non-contract airline offers a lower published fare to the general public. However, identical airfares offered to state travelers only are not included as part of this exception.
- g. Travel is undertaken by persons with disabilities, other persons in the custody of the state, or in a medical emergency.
- h. Use of contract travel vendors may present a security or safety risk to the traveler.
- i. Even though a traveler is not required to use the contracted rental car companies for travel paid from non-appropriated funds, the amount of reimbursement (including the loss/damage waiver protection) will be limited to the contracted rates unless a valid exception is claimed. (Documentation may be required to verify the exception.)
- j. Any travel service obtained at a price lower than the contracted rate may be used. MSU employees should also use these contracted services when reimbursement will be requested from institutional (local) funds.

Please notify the Business Office as soon as possible if problems arise with any of the contracted vendors.

C. State Contracted Credit Card System

The STMP has contracted with a credit card company to provide charge cards for official travel use. The procedure outlining the use of the state travel card may be found in MSU OP 70.09: Use of the State Travel Card.

Compliance Policy:

1. It is the responsibility of the traveler's supervisor and the financial manager to review the employee's travel arrangements listed on the RTA and then review the travel expenses claimed on the expense report or travel voucher to ensure that travel expenses reimbursed from appropriated funds meets the requirements (rates) of the STMP contracted travel services or one of the above noted exceptions.
2. The Business Office will check travel vouchers for compliance with the requirements of the STMP and University operating policies. Expense reports that are not in compliance with these provisions may be delayed or rejected.
3. If direct billing is used for charges such as airfare or hotels, the RTA provides the authorization to charge the specified fund/organization (See MSU OP 70.03: University Paid Expenses).

D. Authority to Approve Travel

1. Prior to travel, the traveler's supervisor and the appropriate Vice President, if applicable, will approve the RTA, provided that such travel contributes to the mission of the University and is in accordance with current travel regulations. A detailed business purpose/benefit statement must be listed on the RTA and/or the travel voucher.
2. Prior approval for all travel is required for absences from the campus (or other designated headquarters) for business purposes for periods of half a day (4 hours or more) during the normal working period, whether or not there is a cost to the University. The traveler must complete a RTA and obtain approval as noted within each division's succession plan. (As well as any additional approvals needed dependent on the type of trip.)
3. Appropriate arrangements for disposition of duties must be made in advance of the travel. If classes are to be missed, a qualified member of the instructional staff shall be identified and approved by the department head as a substitute instructor. Under normal circumstances, classes should not be rescheduled.
4. Any changes in travel dates and/or estimated expense amounts will require the traveler to contact the Business Office.

E. International Travel

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

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](#).

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

TTU

TTU System *Regents' Rule* **12.04**

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

MSU

[MSU OP 70.01: Travel Authority and Definitions for MSU](#)

[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](#)

V. Responsible Office

Contact: Business Office

Phone: (940) 397-4104

E-mail: bus.office@msutexas.edu

VI. Revision History

— 2025: Approved and adopted by MSU President Stacia Haynie as Operating Policy/Procedure (“OP”) 70.02: Authorization for Official Travel.

Stacia Haynie, President
Midwestern State University

Date Signed: _____