

UNION COUNTY TRAVEL POLICY

Adopted February 17, 2014

Revised August 14, 2023

Revised October 6, 2025

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish guidelines for the County's payment of transportation, lodging, meals, and incidental travel expenses for County employees and authorized Agents who travel on official county business to attend schools, conferences, seminars, conventions, meetings, and for other designated purposes.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all County employees and to any agents of the County who travel on Official County Business, when the County is responsible for paying or reimbursing travel expenses. All travel must be conducted in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this policy.

III. Definitions

Wherever used in this Policy and printed with initial capital letters, the terms listed below will have the meanings indicated.

- A. Agent** - Any officer, official, volunteer, board member, appointee, or other person authorized to conduct Official County Business.
- B. Business Meal** - A meal with a clearly substantiated business purpose directly associated with conducting Official County Business.
- C. County** - Union County, North Carolina.
- D. Covered Person** - Any County employee or Agent who is subject to the provisions of this Policy in accordance with Section II.
- E. County Manager** - The County Manager of Union County and the County Manager's designee, including Deputy County Manager and Assistant County Manager.
- F. Day Travel** - Trips taken where the time from departure to return is less than twelve (12) hours and no overnight stay is required.
- G. Director** - The Director of a County Department, and the Director's designee, if any. For purposes of this Policy, "Director" also includes the Sheriff, Register of Deeds, and County Attorney. When Director approval is required for a Covered Person, it refers to the Director of the department in which the Covered Person is employed, or, for Agents, the Director with whom such Agent is most closely affiliated.

H. Incidental Travel Expenses - Minor customary travel-related expenses including fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel staff, and ship staff.

I. IRS Rate - The Business Standard Mileage Rate published by the Internal Revenue Service in the most recent annual notice.

J. Local Travel - Travel occurring within Union County or any adjacent counties, including Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Stanly, Anson (NC), and Lancaster and Chesterfield (SC).

K. Official County Business - Authorized business that serves a direct and lawful public purpose and is conducted by a Covered Person on behalf of the County.

L. Out Of State Travel - Travel beginning when a person leaves the State of North Carolina and continuing until the person returns to North Carolina.
Exception: Travel to Lancaster or Chesterfield Counties, South Carolina, is not considered Out-of-State Travel under this Policy.

M. International Travel - Travel that involves leaving the United States and its territories. All International Travel must be approved in advance by the Department Director and the County Manager, and may require additional documentation, such as justification of public purpose, travel insurance, and compliance with federal travel advisories.

N. Policy - This Union County Travel Policy.

O. Travel Away from Home - Travel that meets both of the following conditions:
Requires the Covered Person to be away from Union County for more than twelve (12) hours and necessitates overnight rest or sleep to meet the demands of Official County Business.

P. Travel Reimbursement Form - Form designated by Union County's Finance Department that a Covered Person must submit to request reimbursement for travel-related expenses.

IV. Covered Person Responsibilities

Covered Persons shall exercise the same care incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds. This standard applies equally to domestic and international travel. Covered Persons are expected to utilize services and accommodations appropriate for conducting Official County Business and to travel in reasonable comfort while exercising good judgment in distinguishing between comfort and extravagance.

The County will not pay or reimburse costs resulting from circuitous routes, luxury accommodations, or services unnecessary or unjustified in such travel. By way of illustration and not limitation, the County will not pay for or reimburse the cost for in-room movies and room service meals. Covered Persons will be responsible for any travel costs and expenses incurred for personal

preference or convenience. Any travel expenses for family or guests of a Covered Person are not eligible for reimbursement by the County.

All travel, whether for continuing education, conferences, training, or some other Official County Business – including International Travel, is dependent upon the availability of budgeted funds. Such budgeted funds should be approved in advance as part of the annual budget for the applicable Department. The Director is ultimately responsible for communicating County policies to Covered Persons within such Director's Department.

V. General Provisions

A. Registration Fees – Advance payment of registration fees for educational opportunities, conferences, seminars, training, or other courses requires approval by the Director. Covered Persons shall use a procurement card for payment of registration fees when this payment option is available. When not available, Covered Persons shall request payment by check in advance of payment deadlines in order to provide the Finance Department with sufficient time to process payment.

B. Use of County Vehicles – Covered Persons are encouraged to drive County vehicles when available and when the Covered Person is authorized to drive a County vehicle. A Covered Person should contact the County Garage for vehicle availability. Gas cards are provided for these vehicles, and a Covered Person should use an authorized station for fueling when possible. Directors may use their own personal vehicle at the discretion of the County Manager. Any other Covered Persons may use their own personal vehicle at the discretion of the Director.

C. Parking Fees – The County will pay or reimburse reasonable parking or garage fees for all travel conducted on Official County Business.

D. Travel Advance Payments – Except for the payment of registration fees pursuant to Section V(A), travel advances will require approval by the Director of Finance. If an extenuating circumstance exists, the Director of Finance may at his/her discretion approve a travel advance on a case-by-case basis. Covered Persons requesting a travel advance will provide notice to the Finance Department not later than ten (10) business days prior to the commencement of travel in order for the Finance Department to have sufficient time to prepare the check. If a travel advance is approved, proper documentation of the expenses upon which the travel advance was used will be submitted in accordance with the procedures described in Section VIII of this Policy. Any portion of a travel advance not used by the Covered Person shall be returned to the County's Finance Department. The documentation, along with any portion of the travel advance which was unused, must be submitted to the Finance Department within ten (10) business days upon completion of travel. Failure to submit the required documentation and/or unused portion of the travel advance within the required timeframe will result in a payroll deduction from the employee's

pay in the amount of the travel advance. By accepting a travel advance payment, the employee consents to such withdrawal in accordance with these conditions.

E. Local Travel – Covered Persons who receive a monthly travel allowance are not eligible for reimbursement for transportation expenses when engaged in Local Travel. The County will not pay or reimburse lodging expenses relative to Local Travel unless prior written approval has been given by the County Manager.

F. Approval for Travel Away From Home and Out Of State Travel - All Travel Away From Home requires prior approval by the Director. All Out Of State Travel (unless constituting Day Travel) requires prior written approval by the County Manager. This provision does not apply to county commissioners, the Sheriff, or Register of Deeds.

G. Business Meals- If a Director deems it necessary for County staff and/or officials to have a Business Meal outside of the workplace (which may include other government officials, business community members, prospective employees, or other appropriate persons), the County will pay for or reimburse reasonable meal expenses. Such meals should be purchased using a procurement card, when possible. As justification for such use of the procurement card and in order to receive reimbursement for a Business Meal when use of the procurement card is not possible, the Covered Person shall submit a meal receipt along with an agenda or a statement of purpose of the Business Meal. The agenda or statement of purpose shall contain a list of all attendees at the Business Meal.

When a Director deems it necessary for County employees to work during normal meal breaks, (e.g. lunch hour), and meals or refreshments are provided during such a meeting, the County will pay for such meal as a Business Meal. In such instance, the Director shall use a procurement card and shall submit to the Finance Department the meal receipt, an agenda or statement of purpose of the meal, and a list of all attendees.

H. Expenses Incurred by Agents – The County will pay or reimburse travel expenses incurred by Agents only upon approval by the Director affiliated with the Agent. If there is no Director affiliated with the Agent, the travel expenses incurred by the Agent must be approved by the County Manager; provided, however, that travel expenses incurred by county commissioners do not require approval by a Director or the County Manager. Instead, county commissioners must submit travel expenses in accordance with Section VIII and otherwise comply in full with the requirements of this Policy. The County Manager will review the Travel Reimbursement Forms submitted by county commissioners for compliance with this Policy prior to payment or reimbursement by the County's Finance Department.

I. Cancellations - Penalties and charges resulting from the cancellation of, or change to, scheduled travel is the County's obligation if the Covered Person's travel was approved in advance and the cancellation or change is made at the direction of, and for the convenience of, the County. If the cancellation or change is made for the personal benefit

of the Covered Person, it is the Covered Person's obligation to pay the penalties and charges, unless resulting from serious illness or death to the Covered Person or to a person in the Covered Person's immediate family, or from other critical circumstances beyond the control of the Covered Person.

J. Alcoholic Beverages - The County will not pay for or reimburse expenses related to the purchase of alcoholic beverages under any circumstances. Covered Persons shall not provide alcoholic beverages at County sponsored meals for boards, committees, commissions, or other functions. Any Covered Person who incurs alcohol-related expenses shall be solely responsible for those expenses.

K. International Travel

International travel must comply with all applicable provisions of this Policy and the following additional requirements:

Pre-Approval:

All international travel must receive prior written approval from the County Manager, in addition to any departmental approvals required under this Policy. Approval requests must be submitted with justification demonstrating that the travel is necessary for Official County Business and cost-effective.

Travel Documentation and Compliance:

Covered Persons are responsible for securing all necessary travel documents including passports, visas, work permits (if applicable), and required vaccinations or immunizations. Documentation expenses may be reimbursable if pre-approved.

Flight Arrangements:

Airfare for international travel must be booked at the lowest available economy class rate. Business class airfare will not be reimbursed unless prior written justification and approval are provided, such as for extended travel durations, medical accommodation, or unique business needs.

Currency and Transaction Fees:

Reasonable foreign currency exchange and international transaction fees will be reimbursed with proper itemized receipts.

Lodging and Meals:

When traveling internationally, Covered Persons should utilize government-negotiated or conference hotel rates whenever possible. Meal and incidental expense (M&IE) reimbursements for international locations will follow the U.S. Department of State Foreign Per Diem Rates, rather than GSA rates. These rates can be found at: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp.

Procurement Card Usage:

Procurement cards should be used when possible, for international expenses. Covered Persons are advised to notify their card provider before departure to ensure uninterrupted access. International exchange fees should be expected when using the procurement card for international expenses.

Safety and Travel Advisories:

Covered Persons are expected to consult the U.S. Department of State's travel advisories (<https://travel.state.gov>) and follow any County policies regarding safety in high-risk or restricted areas.

VI. Payment or Reimbursement for Day Travel

A. Transportation Expenses – The County will reimburse Covered Persons for use of their personal vehicle for non-Local Travel at the IRS Rate. The County will reimburse Covered Persons for use of their personal vehicle for Local Travel at the IRS Rate, provided that such Covered Persons do not receive a monthly travel allowance. The mileage reimbursed will be measured from the Covered Person's beginning location or the location where the Covered Person typically reports to work, whichever results in a lesser distance.

B. Meals – The County will pay for meals taken during Day Travel when (i) a Covered Person's travel reasonably occurs during regular meal hours, and (ii) such meal otherwise constitutes a Business Meal. In such instances, the Covered Person shall use a procurement card and shall submit to the Finance Department the actual meal receipt(s).

VII. Payment or Reimbursement for Travel Away From Home

A. Transportation Expenses – The County will reimburse Covered Persons for use of their personal vehicle for non-Local Travel at the IRS Rate. The County will reimburse Covered Persons for use of their personal vehicle for Local Travel at the IRS Rate, provided that such Covered Persons do not receive a monthly travel allowance. The mileage reimbursed will be measured from the Covered Person's beginning location or the location where the Covered Person typically reports to work, whichever results in a lesser distance.

The County will pay for or reimburse the cost of fare for bus, train, taxi, and air transportation. Covered Persons must obtain such tickets at the most economical rate available, and they shall make reservations as far in advance as possible to obtain the lowest rates available. If a commercial airline is used, the County will only pay the cost of the airfare and one checked bag (if such a checked bag charge is applicable). Only standard coach/economy class airfares are authorized. Use of a procurement card for payment of such transportation expenses is required when this payment option is available. A detailed receipt along with an agenda or a statement of purpose must be included as part of the procurement card payment.

B. Lodging– The County will pay the actual cost of a commercial lodging establishment. Covered Persons shall utilize conference/seminar hotel packages when available. In the event a conference/seminar package is not available, the Covered Person shall obtain lodging at a reasonable price within a reasonable distance from the conference/seminar or place where the Covered Person is required to conduct Official County Business. Covered Persons shall request a government rate when making reservations if conference/seminar packages are not available. A Covered Person shall use a procurement card to make reservations at a commercial lodging establishment. A detailed original receipt is required indicating the dates of stay, the daily room rate, and all applicable taxes, along with an agenda or a statement of purpose. Credit card receipts are not sufficient.

Job related telephone calls are reimbursable as long as they are shown on the hotel bill. Personal telephone calls will not be reimbursed nor paid for with a County procurement card. When more than one Covered Person occupies the same hotel room, the total lodging expense should be reported on only one of the Covered Person's Travel Reimbursement Forms (if such expenses are not paid by procurement card). When another person who is not a Covered Person occupies the same hotel room with a Covered Person during authorized travel, the Covered Person must pay the difference between the single and double room rates, if applicable.

C. Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) for Travel Away From Home –

Effective with the implementation of this Policy, Covered Persons who undertake Travel Away From Home will no longer be allowed to purchase meals or incur Incidental Travel Expenses using a procurement card, nor will they be reimbursed based upon receipts for such expenses. Rather, Covered Persons will receive a daily M&IE allowance for meals and Incidental Travel Expenses for each day of travel as provided for in this Section. The daily M&IE allowance shall be requested on the Covered Person's Travel Reimbursement Form and submitted in accordance with Section VIII of this Policy.

A daily M&IE allowance will be provided using the most current version of the *Maximum Federal Per Diem Rates* for meals and incidental expenses as published by the U.S. General Services Administration ("GSA"). These rates are currently available at the GSA's website: <http://www.gsa.gov>.

For international travel, the M&IE allowance will be calculated using the U.S. Department of State Foreign Per Diem Rates for meals and incidental expenses. These rates vary by country and city, and include amounts for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. Covered Persons should consult the most current rate applicable to their destination. Adjustments for meals provided by a conference, host agency, or airline must still be deducted using the State Department's deduction guidance. These rates can be found at: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp.

A Covered Person shall take the following steps to calculate the amount of the M&IE allowance for each day of travel (please also refer to subsection D of this Section for a sample calculation). This calculation must be done separately for each day of travel.

Step 1

Determine which column of the daily M&IE allowance chart (shown below as an example only, subject to change) corresponds with the M&IE allowance amount (shown as the M&IE total) applicable to the Covered Person's area of travel. The Covered Person's area of travel is based upon the work/conference/seminar location, not the accommodation location.

The column which corresponds with the Covered Person's area of travel is determined by the federal government based upon average costs in that area. By way of example only, if a Covered Person's area of travel is Raleigh, the current applicable M&IE column is the \$74 column; whereas if a Covered Person's area of travel is Asheville, the current applicable M&IE column is the \$80 column. The applicable M&IE allowance column amounts which correspond with areas of travel are currently available on the GSA's website at: <http://www.gsa.gov>.

Once the appropriate column is determined, the Covered Person should only utilize that column in their calculations of each day's M&IE allowance amount for that particular area of travel.

Step 2

Determine whether the M&IE allowance amount for that day is based upon the full M&IE allowance amount in the top row of the column, or if the M&IE allowance amount for that day is based upon the partial M&IE allowance amount shown in the bottom row of the column.

On the first day of travel, the last day of travel, or partial travel days (those Travel Away From Home trips that last longer than 12 hours, but less than 24 hours), the Covered Person should use the partial M&IE allowance amount shown in the bottom row of the column in calculating the M&IE allowance amount for that day.

Otherwise, on full days of travel, the Covered Person should use the full M&IE allowance amount shown in the top row of the column in calculating the M&IE allowance amount for that day.

Step 3

Determine if any deductions should be made from the M&IE allowance amount determined in Step 2.

If there are no meals furnished to the Covered Person at the conference/course/meeting on that day (e.g. meals included as part of the registration fees already paid by the County or

vendor/association sponsored meals), then there are no required deductions. The Covered Person will receive the M&IE allowance amount determined in Step 2.

However, if there are meals furnished to the Covered Person at the conference/course/meeting on that day (as described in the paragraph above), a Covered Person shall deduct the appropriate amount from the amount determined in Step 2 based upon the type of meal(s) provided (This applies for all Travel Away From Home within the Continental United States). This deduction must be made for each such meal. The amount remaining after such meal deductions from the Step 2 amount is the M&IE allowance applicable for that day. However, the total amount of deductions made shall never cause a Covered Person to receive less than the amount allowed for incidentals in the chart below.

M&IE total	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidental expenses	First and last day of travel
\$68	\$16	\$19	\$28	\$5	\$51.00
\$74	\$18	\$20	\$31	\$5	\$55.50
\$80	\$20	\$22	\$33	\$5	\$60.00
\$86	\$22	\$23	\$36	\$5	\$64.50
\$92	\$23	\$26	\$38	\$5	\$69.00

Exception for Union County Sheriff's Office

This paragraph only applies to Covered Persons associated with the Union County Sheriff's Office. Other than as set forth in this paragraph, Sections VII(C)–(D) of this Policy do not apply to Covered Persons associated with the Union County Sheriff's Office during Travel Away From Home.

Such Covered Persons will not receive a daily M&IE allowance for meals and incidental travel expenses. Instead, these individuals shall comply with the following guidelines:

Meal Expenses:

Covered Persons shall either:

- a) use a procurement card for meal costs incurred during Travel Away From Home, or
- b) use personal funds and submit a Travel Reimbursement Request for actual meal costs.

All reimbursement requests must include:

Itemized meal receipts, and an agenda or statement of purpose for the meal to substantiate the expense.

Meal reimbursement or procurement card payments shall not exceed the applicable per-meal deduction amounts based on GSA's current Maximum Federal Per Diem Rates for the area of travel, as outlined in Step 1 of this Section.

For example, if the M&IE total for the area is \$68 per day, the County shall pay or reimburse up to: \$16 for breakfast, \$19 for lunch and \$28 for dinner.

Incidental Travel Expenses:

Covered Persons may submit a Travel Reimbursement Request for actual incidental expenses incurred each day, up to the daily incidental expense limit specified in the GSA's current Maximum Federal Per Diem Rates for the relevant area of travel.

Example: If the incidental expense portion is \$5 per day (as shown in the sample chart below), reimbursement will be limited to \$5 per day.

D. Sample M&IE Allowance Calculation

Use of the GSA formula for calculation of the M&IE allowance is best illustrated by example. Note that this example does not consider any transportation or lodging expenses.

A Covered Person leaves Union County on Monday morning for a conference in Asheville. The conference takes place on Monday afternoon, all day Tuesday and Wednesday, and Thursday morning. The Covered Person returns to Union County on Thursday afternoon. On Tuesday the conference (which was paid for by the County) provides lunch and dinner. On Wednesday, the conference provides lunch only. On Thursday, the conference provides breakfast only. Because provided as part of the conference, these meals have in effect already been paid for by the County.

The applicable M&IE allowance total for the travel area (Asheville) is the \$80 column. The M&IE allowance for each day will be calculated as follows based upon the applicable \$80 M&IE allowance column:

Monday- \$60 = [first day of travel allowance amount (\$60) with no provided meal deductions]

Tuesday- \$25 = [full day M&IE allowance amount (\$80) with a \$22 deduction for the provided lunch and a \$33 deduction for the provided dinner]

Wednesday- \$58 = [full day M&IE allowance amount (\$80) with a \$22 deduction for the provided lunch]

Thursday- \$40 = [last day of travel allowance amount (\$60) with a \$20 deduction for the provided breakfast).

VIII. Travel Reimbursement Procedures

A. Submitting a Travel Reimbursement Request – A Covered Person must complete a Travel Reimbursement Form and attach original itemized receipts (excluding meals and incidental expenses if requesting the M&IE allowance) for expenses to be reimbursed. All appropriate areas of the reimbursement form must be completed. The form includes the date of departure and arrival at the official workplace and/or any other place travel begins or ends. Departure and arrival times must be included if a M&IE allowance is requested. If any portion is left blank, the Travel Reimbursement Form will be returned to the Covered Person submitting the form.

The Covered Person must also submit a copy of the conference program, agenda and/or a statement of purpose for travel indicating the days and times of the conference/seminar/course/purpose of business, along with the Travel Reimbursement Form. If the travel period is greater than the length of the conference/seminar/course/purpose of business, the Covered Person must submit documentation indicating that there is a savings to the County by staying additional days and/or nights. Documentation includes, by way of illustration only, quotes from a ticket agent on such items as airfare, quotes on accommodation rates, etc.

For international travel, Covered Persons must also submit:

- A copy of the international flight itinerary.
- All required documentation receipts in English or accompanied by a translated summary.
- The applicable U.S. Department of State per diem schedule for the travel destination.

B. Approval and Processing of Reimbursement Requests – The Covered Person must submit the Travel Reimbursement Form and all supporting documentation to their Director, or the County Manager, as applicable, for approval within thirty (30) days of completion of the travel. After signed approval, the Travel Reimbursement Form and all accompanying documentation is forwarded to the County's Finance Department. A Travel Reimbursement Form submitted by a county commissioner is reviewed by the County Manager for the sole purpose of determining compliance with this Policy before being forwarded to the County's Finance Department.

The Finance Department will audit the Travel Reimbursement Form. This includes validating the required signed authorized approval, verifying mathematical calculations, verifying

travel receipts submitted, and confirming that M&IE allowances requested are in compliance with this Policy. If an error is discovered in the Travel Reimbursement Form or accompanying documentation, the reimbursement amount will be adjusted accordingly, and the Finance Department will notify the submitting Covered Person and the approving Director (or County Manager) prior to payment.

IX. Penalties Associated with Violation of this Policy or Abuse of Travel Reimbursement

A. Union County Personnel Resolution – An intentional violation of this Policy constitutes unacceptable personal conduct under the Union County Personnel Resolution. Such an intentional violation of this Policy by a County employee may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from County employment.

Employees who abuse travel privileges shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from County employment, as deemed appropriate by the County Manager. Abuse of travel privileges includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Falsification of travel documentation or requests for reimbursement.
- Submission of requests for travel expenses not determined to be related to the purpose of travel.
- Use of County vehicles for transportation not related to the purpose of travel.

B. State Statute Penalties – A Covered Person submitting or approving falsified reimbursement forms is subject to disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution. It is provided in G.S. § 159-181(a) that any governing board member, officer, or employee of a local government submitting a written claim or approving a claim for funds, knowing that any portion of such claim is false, is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

Any employee who receives reimbursement or has expenses paid by any other source including vendors, federal, state, or local grants, or any private contributor may not claim those same expenses for reimbursement from the County. A claim submitted for such expenses is in violation of G.S. § 159-181(a) as noted above.

X. Variances

It is understood that this Policy may not anticipate every conceivable circumstance pursuant to which payment or reimbursement of travel expenses by the County may be reasonable. Therefore, approval of a variance may be granted by the County Manager if it is concluded that strict enforcement of this Policy would result in severe practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships for the Covered Person and that by granting the variance the spirit of the Policy will be observed and substantial justice done.

XI. Effective Date

This Policy shall become effective for travel beginning on or after October 7, 2025, and it shall supersede the Union County Travel Policy in effect for travel occurring prior to such time.

Adopted by the Union County Board of Commissioners this the 17th day of February, 2014.

Revised August 14, 2023, April 7, 2014, and October 6, 2025.