

State of Rhode Island  
Department of Administration

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTS AND CONTROL

**OAC-OUT OF STATE TRAVEL POLICY**

**OUT OF STATE TRAVEL POLICY**

**REVISED JULY 2025**

**Division Contact:**  
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**1. Purpose**

This policy provides guidance to State agencies and employees regarding requirements for air travel, surface transportation and lodging for all state employees and/or those individuals utilizing State-related funds (state, federal, restricted, etc.), traveling domestically or, as necessary, internationally during a contract period.

**2. Applicability**

All personnel traveling under these procedures are expected to exercise prudent responsibility when committing State funds. Travel on business should be conducted at minimum cost for achieving the success of the mission. The traveler is expected to exercise the same care in incurring travel expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling at his/her own expense.

**3. Procedures for Compliance**

*A. Administration*

1. The State Controller's Office will be the liaison between the designated travel agent and all state personnel, and will be responsible for establishing, interpreting, and administering the guidelines of this policy.
2. The State Controller is designated as the State Travel Administrator and may delegate this responsibility as needed.
3. The State Travel Administrator will be responsible for providing assistance and information in accordance with the policies and guidelines established.
4. All out-of-state travel must be processed through the designated travel agent utilizing the Master Price Agreement (MPA) (unless otherwise noted). The MPA includes any travel arrangements which are necessary relating to an employee's position, but which are paid for with non-State funds.
  - a. All travel arrangements including air, ground transportation and lodging must be made through the designated travel agent (unless otherwise noted).
  - b. Information regarding the designated travel agent, their contact information and how to book travel can be found on the Controller's

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website: <http://controller.admin.ri.gov/StateTravel/index.php>

- c. **A Spend Authorization (SA) within RI ERP will be required for all travel services.** A Spend Authorization is the process by which the state authorizes and encumbers the expenditure of funds for an employee to participate in an event. This number will be required by the designated travel agent before travel arrangements can be made. The SA must include:
- i. Traveler name
  - ii. Destination
  - iii. Purpose of Travel
  - iv. Estimated Costs
  - v. Travel dates – every effort must be taken to minimize the number of days needed for travel. For example, when traveling to/from Washington, DC, the return date should be the last day of the conference/seminar. Documentation is required to justify extra travel days.
- d. All personnel authorized to travel may be required to complete a traveler profile/application, including the applicable “alpha code” received from the agency or department business office, and submit the completed profile/application to the designated travel agent. The “alpha code” will identify a state ghost travel card account to charge the travel expenses and agent fees per the terms of the MPA.
- e. Upon completion of the arrangements, the travel agent will forward to the traveler a complete itinerary of all necessary travel documents.
- f. All issues during travel, including canceled/delayed flights must be brought to the attention of the designated travel agent so they can assist with any rebooking needs.
- g. The designated travel agent is required to maintain a 24 hours/day, 7 days/week service.
- h. Any travel plan changes or cancelations outside of normal business hours can be completed by calling the toll-free number assigned by the designated travel agent and published on the controller’s website.
- i. Any issues with the designated travel agent should be brought directly to the attention of the state travel administrator.
5. Each agency, department, board and commission shall have an internal approval process for out-of-state travel whereby department directors and/or chief executive officers authorize, or delegate the authority to authorize, all travel.
- Travel approvers within RI ERP will be assigned the role of Out of State Travel Approver.

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6. Department directors and/or chief executive officers may prescribe their own department procedures to strengthen controls and accountability of out-of-state travel requirements. Department directors and/or chief executive officers may authorize non-state employees to travel at the state's expense to conduct state business. The director shall clearly document that the individual traveler is performing a necessary service, and it is in the best interest of the state to have said individual travel at the state's expense. The non-state employee will be expected to comply with all guidelines and policies stated in this procedure and will be reimbursed based on this procedure.
  7. Third-party funded travel
    - a. If the third party will reimburse the state directly for the costs of the common carriers, hotel(s), car rental agencies, and meals and other travel costs, the employee **must** use the designated state travel agent. If the third party will pay common carriers, hotel(s), and car rental agencies directly and/or reimburse the employee directly, the employee may use the designated state travel agent, or any other travel agent of his/her choosing, or travel agent designated by the third party.
  8. Emergency travel demands may be necessary.
    - a. "Emergency travel" is defined as travel required (not voluntary) in the next 24 hours that would otherwise have been impossible to plan in advance. For example, the court orders a social worker on Tuesday to place/pick up a child out of state on Wednesday.
    - b. Emergency travel can be booked via the designated travel agent with proper agency/department approval (see section 3.A.5 above).
    - c. Documentation must be submitted with the requisition detailing the events necessitating the emergency travel.
  9. Travelers may enter loyalty/rewards numbers when booking travel. The traveler must select the most economical fare possible regardless of rewards programs.

*B. Transportation*

1. Transportation will be by common carrier and includes air, rail (Amtrak), and automobile. The traveler must use the designated travel agent via the Master Price Agreement (MPA) to book all these transportation types (this does not include Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) service or Peter Pan bus service).
  - a. All transportation costs and agent fees will be charged to the agency's

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- state travel card account.
- b. Travelers cannot book services via the MPA contract for personal use and/or utilizing a personal credit card.
2. Allowable transportation accommodations will include coach fares, utilizing the most economical fares possible. Most economical fares consist of the travel agent utilizing all available travel discounts including Saturday night stay-over where it is beneficial to the State.
    - a. Travelers will not be allowed to take direct flights if there are other options which are economically advantageous to the State while still allowing the traveler to conduct their business in a timely manner.
    - b. Travelers must consider the total costs of an itinerary when traveling to/from a destination or area. For example, when considering a departure out of Boston vs a departure out of Providence, travelers must compare the entire cost of the trip, including the increased cost of parking and/or any mileage that may be incurred.
  3. Baggage fees will be reimbursed as follows:
    - a. A scanned copy of the detailed receipt is required to be uploaded to the expense report in RI ERP Expense Reimbursement System.
    - b. Each traveler will be reimbursed for the first checked bag, each way.
    - c. Any additional baggage fees greater than the first checked bag will be the sole responsibility of the traveler.
    - d. Travelers should read the airline's baggage fee rules before booking.
  4. Fees/Charges Incurred to Change Booked Travel
    - a. The state **will** pay fees/charges assessed by carriers or the designated travel agent for a change in travel arrangements **if the reason for the change is business related.**
    - b. The state **will** pay fees/charges assessed by airline carriers or the designated travel agent for cancellation and re-issuance of an airline ticket **if the reason for cancellation and re-issuance of the ticket is business related.**
    - c. All changes, cancellations and re-issuances must be processed via the designated travel agent. Any fees/charges incurred by a traveler for changing, canceling or rebooking directly with a common carrier will not be reimbursed.
  5. Airline fees will be paid by the state as follows:
    - a. All taxes and fees included in the purchased fare

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- b. Agent fees incurred at original purchase and incurred for any changes/re-bookings allowed per section 3.B.4 above
    - c. Mandatory fees charged by an airline at the time of booking
    - d. The state **will not** pay or reimburse for any optional convenience fees or upgrade fees, including early check-in fees or seat upgrade fees.
  6. Personal vehicles may be used for travel in lieu of common carriers when it is economically advantageous to the State. Example: when two (2) or more state travelers are traveling to the same destination or when common carrier service is not available.
    - a. A detailed analysis is required showing the cost benefit of using a personal vehicle.
    - b. Documentation must include the lowest available common carrier fare obtained from the designated travel agent.
    - c. Reimbursement will be made based on miles traveled at the current Internal Revenue Service (IRS) published mileage reimbursement rate or the common carrier fee, whichever is lower.
  7. Shuttle services and other means of public transportation should be used whenever available and is prudent.
    - a. Lyft, Uber and taxi cabs should only be used when no other ground transportation is available, and it is economically advantageous to the State.
    - b. Reimbursement for any of these means of transportation, if allowed, will be processed when supported by detailed receipts uploaded to the traveler's expense report. The traveler should keep all original receipts until reimbursement is received.
  8. Car rentals should only be approved when no other ground transportation is available, it is economically advantageous to the State, or it is necessary to accomplish the travel mission.
    - a. A memo from the traveler must be attached to the agency travel request explaining why the rental car is necessary or economical.
    - b. When approved, the SA must reflect estimated car rental amounts for the traveler to book a car rental with the designated travel agent.
    - c. Whenever possible, one of the preferred car rental companies must be chosen to ensure that the State has the necessary liability and collision coverages. If a preferred car rental company is not chosen, it is the traveler's responsibility to ensure they have the proper coverages in place as to limit the State from liability.

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9. The following are obligations of the traveler when renting a vehicle to conduct State business:
    - a. Possess a proper license to operate the vehicle being rented.
    - b. Wear seat belts in accordance with all state laws.
    - c. Obey all traffic laws.
    - d. Transporting hitchhikers is prohibited.
    - e. Consuming drugs or alcohol before or while operating the vehicle is prohibited.
    - f. Complete a report of any vehicle damage and advise your agency immediately.
    - g. Fill the fuel tank prior to returning the rental vehicle to the rental car company. Obtain a receipt for any gasoline purchased to request reimbursement.
    - h. The State will not pay or reimburse any costs, fine penalties, or assessments incurred by a traveler that resulted from violation of any federal or state law or local ordinances while operating a vehicle on official state business.
  
  10. State vehicles may be obtained from the traveler's department (pooled cars, if available) or from the State motor pool, if available, for ground transportation when feasible.
  
  11. Toll expenses incurred while traveling will be reimbursed as follows:
    - a. Dated receipts are required for all toll expenses. A scanned copy of the receipt must be attached to the SA in the RI ERP Expense Reimbursement System.
    - b. Receipt dates and locations must correspond with the traveler's itinerary.
    - c. For any toll bill received after the traveler has returned home (either from a rental car company or directly from a state, turnpike or bridge authority), the traveler must pay directly and seek reimbursement.
    - d. Toll bill late fees will be the sole responsibility of the traveler.
  
  12. Travelers who use their personal vehicles to travel to/from a common carrier terminal will be reimbursed as follows:
    - a. Mileage reimbursement will be equal to the mileage from their work station to/from the terminal when they travel from their work station to and from the terminal.
    - b. Mileage reimbursement will be equal to the mileage from their home to/from the terminal less the employee's normal commute when they travel from their home to/from the terminal.

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- c. Mileage reimbursement will be made based on the current IRS published mileage reimbursement rate.
  - d. Travelers are only allowed reimbursement for miles driven while they are in the vehicle. For example, if a spouse or family member drives the traveler's vehicle to/from the terminal to drop off/pick up the traveler, they are not entitled to mileage for two (2) round trips.
13. Travelers who park at a common carrier terminal will be reimbursed as follows:
- a. Dated receipts are required for all parking expenses. A scanned copy of the receipt will be attached to the Expense Report in the RI ERP Expense Reimbursement System.
  - b. Receipt dates must correspond with the departure and arrival dates on the traveler's itinerary.
  - c. Reimbursement will be based on the most economical parking rates available on-site. At Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport (PVD) airport, Garage C, Lot E, and Lot O are the allowed parking sites. If a traveler chooses a garage or lot that exceeds the rate in the allowed parking sites, only the maximum rate charged in the allowed parking sites for the period charged will be reimbursed.
  - d. If the traveler has a disability parking permit, parking at a lot or garage closer to the terminal may be approved. A copy of the Disability Parking Placard Certificate will be required.

*C. Lodging*

- 1. Lodging will be secured and guaranteed by the designated travel agent via the Spend Authorization (SA) using the agency's ghost travel card account.
  - a. Upon departure, the traveler is required to carry a state hotel purchase card and use such card to charge all room and room tax charges.
  - b. No charges for food, including room service or on-site restaurants, are allowed on the state hotel purchase card.
- 2. Overnight accommodations will **NOT** be allowed within a 55-mile radius of Providence. Distance from home cannot be used in calculating the 55-mile radius.
  - a. The 55-mile limitation includes the City of Boston.
  - b. Any requests for an exception to this section must be in writing and submitted to the State Travel Administrator prior to booking travel.
- 3. Lodging will be secured by the designated travel agent at the nearest possible

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site to the point of destination. Cost will be a factor in the determination of the site.

- a. Lodging will be provided on a single room basis, or the lowest rate available if a single room is not available.
- b. Government rates, when available and economical, should be utilized.
4. If lodging is provided by a conference and is within reason the most economical in the area, the designated travel agent will establish all reservations. However, if the conference has discounted “block room pricing” or the reservation must be made through a third party (i.e. website), the traveler must make reservations with the hotel directly.
  - a. These reservations may be made using a state hotel purchase card.
  - b. Upon departure, the traveler is required to carry a state hotel purchase card and use such card to charge all room and room tax charges. Charges made to a personal credit card will not be reimbursed.
  - c. Reservations made directly with a hotel cannot be serviced by the designated travel agent. To avoid any potential fees if changes or cancellations are required, it is the traveler’s responsibility to ensure the hotel is notified in a timely manner. The State will not be responsible for hotel charges if an employee fails to notify a hotel of a change or cancellation.
5. At the time reservations for lodging are made, the traveler should inquire about the lowest cost ground transportation available to/from the hotel to/from any common carrier terminal.
  - a. Per section 3.B.7 above, shuttle services should be used whenever available and is prudent.
6. In the event of an overcharge for lodging, or the traveler return earlier than planned which results in a credit due to the State, the traveler is responsible for obtaining reimbursement from the hotel.

*D. Per Diem Allowance (Meals and Incidental Expenses)*

1. Only travelers staying out-of-state overnight will be allowed a per diem allowance.
2. The per diem allowance covers meals and incidental expenses, such as tips and gratuities. Travelers will not be reimbursed separately for these items.
3. The reimbursement is based on the US General Service Administration (GSA) rates for the destination of travel.

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- a. The GSA rates provide travel day and full day rates and will automatically populate in RI ERP.
  4. International travel per diems will be determined by using the “M&IE Rate” published by the U.S. Department of State.
  5. No advance payment of the per diem allowance will be made to the traveler.

*E. Other Travel Expenses*

The following items will be reimbursable to the traveler when **supported by detailed receipts**. The receipts will be scanned and attached to the Expense Report in the RI ERP Expense Reimbursement System. The traveler should retain all receipts until reimbursement is received. Credit card charge slips are not acceptable as a receipt unless an itemized vendor invoice is attached.

1. Parking expenses (see section 3.B.13 for information regarding parking at a common carrier terminal)
2. Necessary business use of a hotel fax, computer, printer or internet connection. Explanation of the business need must be attached.
3. Conference and registration fees when supported by proper documentation.
  - a. The State will not pay for the cost of any conference/seminar social event (golf, outing, awards luncheon or dinner, tours, etc.) which is separate from the conference/seminar registration fee. If chosen, these costs will be the sole responsibility of the traveler.
  - b. Travelers should make every effort to obtain early payment discounts of conference/seminar registration fees.
  - c. If prepayment of a conference/seminar registration fee is required, the agency or department business office may pay via state purchase card, or invoice voucher if the payee is a registered vendor.
  - d. If the traveler chooses to pay for a conference/seminar registration fee out of pocket, he/she will be reimbursed upon returning (see Section F below).

*F. Reimbursement Request*

1. An Expense Report in the RI ERP Expense Reimbursement System must be completed upon the traveler’s return. Once submitted, the expense report will be routed for the appropriate departmental approvals.

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2. Any reimbursement request submission received in the Controller's Office more than 120 days after the traveler's return date will not be processed.
  3. Documentation that must be attached to the Expense Report in the RI ERP Expense Reimbursement System include, if applicable:
    - a. Travel Itinerary (hotel, air and car rental)
    - b. Tickets, boarding passes or ticketless itinerary from the airline
    - c. Baggage fee receipts
    - d. Hotel detail bill (from the actual hotel)
    - e. Agendas/proof of attendance
    - f. Conference/registration fee receipt, if prepayment was not requested
    - g. Car rental receipts
    - h. Shuttle/transportation receipts
    - i. Parking/toll receipts
    - j. Written justifications for any policy exceptions that were made (including lodging within 55-miles of Capitol Hill)
    - k. Other supporting documentation (as needed)
  4. Upon review of the Expense Report and attached documentation, the State Controller's Office will process payment to the employee.
  5. To the extent that a state business trip is extended for personal reasons, the following must occur:
    - a. The employee must receive written permission from their department to extend the trip for personal reasons and attach to the Spend Authorization.
    - b. There must be no added cost to the State for the extension of time.
      - i. The state will not incur any costs for hotel, car rental or per diem for the length of personal stay.
      - ii. The employee must have quotes from the designated travel agent prior to booking to show that the cost of transportation with personal business does not exceed the cost of transportation without personal business.
    - c. The Spend Authorization issued must not include dates traveled on personal business.
    - d. The State will not pay for transportation to/from destination(s) that differ from the destination(s) approved for state business.

*G. Payments Made on the Ghost Travel Card Accounts*

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1. The designated travel agent will charge each ghost travel card account for all authorized travel during a purchase card billing cycle.
  2. The person assigned to reconcile the Ghost Travel card from each agency will be notified of the charge when is imported into the RI ERP Expense Reimbursement System and will then assign travel charges to appropriate employee for inclusion in the traveler's expense report.
  3. The State Controller's Office will charge the appropriate cost for each transaction to agencies/departments based on the accounting selected by the contact person (see item 3.G.2 above).
  4. At the end of each billing cycle, any unreconciled charges will be automatically allocated to the Agency's default account string on file.

**4. Repercussions for Noncompliance**

Unauthorized travel or travel utilizing an agent other than the state designated travel agent as defined in the above policy will require the employee to absorb all related costs.

Travel expenses incurred that are not in compliance with the above policy may result in reduced reimbursements to the traveler.

Continued noncompliance with the above policy may result in the revocation of the traveler's right to travel on state business.

**5. Signatures:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Office of Accounts and Control  
State Controller**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Director of Administration**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**