

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TRAVEL POLICY

The following travel policies are established for the use by individuals who are required to travel in-state and out-of-state on official Mississippi Department of Education government business. These policies are based on and are in addition to the guidelines established by the Department of Finance and Administration, Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management in accordance with Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code Annotated (1972). The State Travel Manual in its entirety can be found at <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/media/6573/travel-manual-0418.pdf>.

Travel Authorization

A Travel Authorization Form must be completed in ADVANCE of all out-of-state travel. For in-state travel, if it is determined after the completion of the Trip Optimizer that a rental should be taken and the individual chooses to rent a vehicle, a Travel Authorization must be completed and approved. For in-state travel, the highest level of approval needed is the "Division Approval". For all out-of-state travel, "Agency Approval" is needed from the State Superintendent.

Travel advances may be requested for out-of-state trips and also for prior-to-trip expenses for in-state travel such as the first night of a hotel which is due when the reservation is made. The Travel Authorization Form must be used to request the advance. Advances should be requested and submitted for processing 15 days before the travel is to occur; however, payment of the advance will not be made more than 10 days in advance. Travel advances must be settled within 10 days of returning.

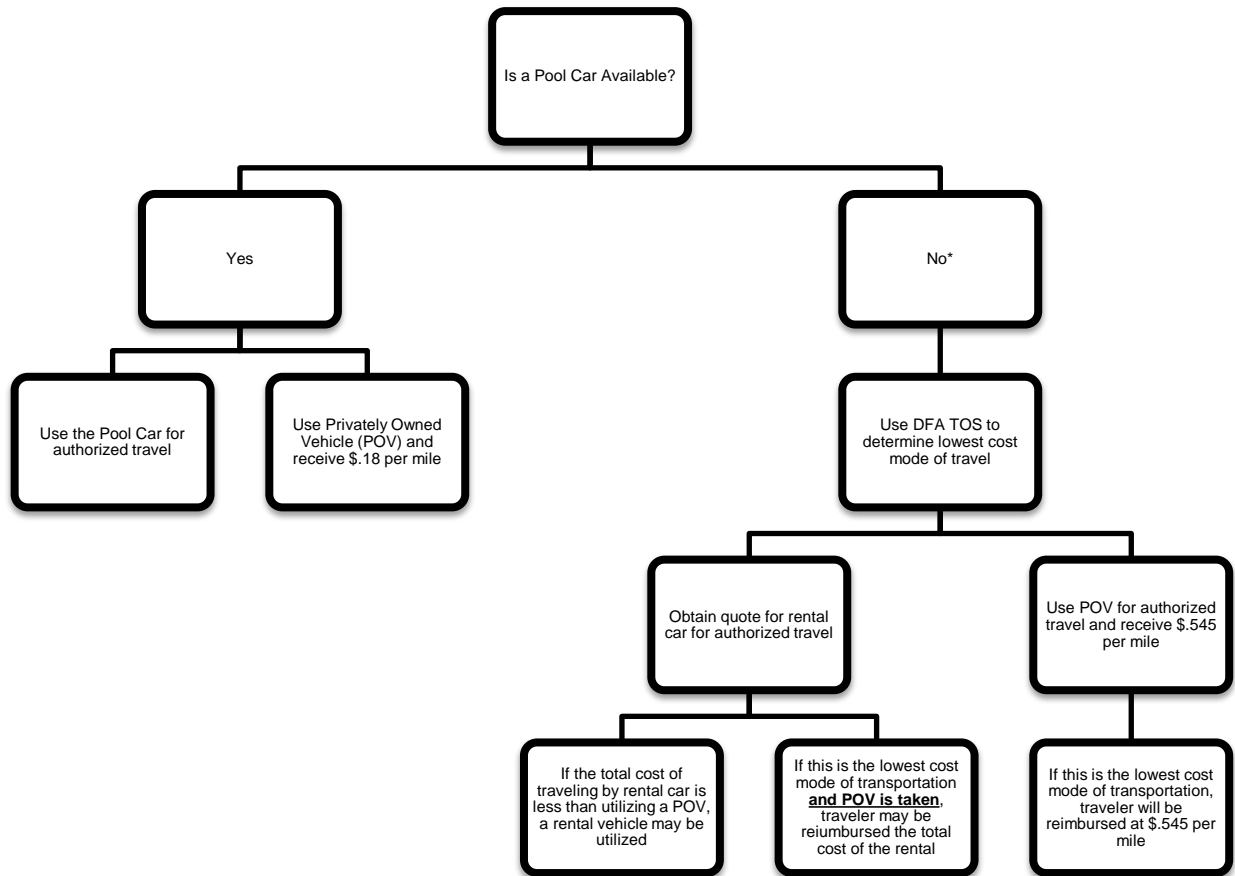
Automobile Travel

Actual mileage shall be calculated from the official duty station or residence and back or actual miles traveled, whichever is less. The most direct route to a destination should be claimed for reimbursement purposes. The travel voucher must indicate if any intermediate stops were made. Specific sites visited must be noted on the voucher in lieu of "Vicinity Travel". Effective July 1, 2017, state agencies under the purview of the DFA Bureau of Fleet Management are required to use the **Trip Optimizer System** developed and administered by the DFA Office of Purchasing, Travel, and Fleet Management in computing the optimum method and cost for travel by state employees using a motor vehicle. Reimbursement will be based on the least expensive method of transportation. Prior to travel, the Trip Optimizer System should be used to determine the lowest cost mode of transportation.

The maximum amount authorized for travel reimbursement related to motor vehicle usage will be the lowest cost option as determined by the Trip Optimizer System. All travel claims submitted for reimbursement must include the results of the Trip Optimizer System indicating the lowest cost option for travel. There are several variables to be entered into the system to

make the calculation, refer to Section 107 of the State Travel Policy & Regulations for more detail. The maximum amount reimbursable for travel by motor vehicle will be the lowest cost calculated. The Trip Optimizer Decision Flow Chart provided by DFA should be used for guidance (see below).

DFA TRIP OPTIMIZER SYSTEM (TOS) DECISION FLOW CHART



*Please be aware that the TOS **MUST** be utilized only when a pool car is not available for use. In those instances, complete the TOS Calculator in order to receive reimbursement, unless an emergency has occurred.

In addition to the flow chart above, also consider the following additional factors when completing the TOS:

- The TOS is to **only** be used if there is no pool car available **and** if the trip that will be taken includes at least one day of travel over 100 miles.

- If a pool vehicle is taken, the TOS Calculator does not need to be submitted with a travel voucher for reimbursement of allowable expenses.
- If a pool vehicle is available and not taken, the traveler will be reimbursed at .18 per mile **and** the TOS Calculator does **not** need to be submitted with a travel voucher for reimbursement of allowable expenses
- When calculating the Total Rental Cost, only **intermediate** size vehicle rates at the rental location **nearest** the employee may be utilized. MDE allows airport rentals.
- Travelers who choose not to utilize a rental vehicle when that is the lowest cost option to the State, may receive as maximum reimbursement the **Total Rental Cost.**
- Mileage to the rental car location and from the rental car location can be claimed on the travel voucher. The mileage should not be doubled; however, when completing the TOS it will be doubled in a formula within the spreadsheet.
- If a rental car is to be rented and the employee must be at a location early, must be traveling early, etc., please be mindful of rental location hours and their customer base. Please allow at least one hour to pick up a rental car or to be picked up by the rental car company. In cases where delays may cause business interruption, travelers should rent the car the day before the authorized travel date. If this is done, please be sure to add the extra day to the TOS calculation and note it on the TOS, travel voucher, or separate memo.
- If the drop off time for a rental car is after hours or will need to be returned the next business day, please add the extra day to the TOS calculation prior to traveling and return the rental the following business day once the authorized travel is completed and note it on the TOS, travel voucher, or separate memo.
- Miscellaneous Fees should be \$0 if the rental will be direct billed to the Department. Only the following can be claimed as “Miscellaneous Fees”:
 - Parking fees can be entered here but supporting documentation should be included.
 - Taxi/Uber/Lyft fares can be placed in this field only if a taxi is needed to arrive at a rental car location and is needed to arrive back home. Be sure to include support for this.
 - Fees charged by the rental company for additional hours in lieu of charging a full day of rental for late returns.

- In the rate instance that a rental will be paid with a personal form of payment, call and obtain sales tax, motor vehicle tax, etc. from the vehicle rental company and input those values into this field. If a POV is taken when the rental rate is the cheaper option, these charges should **not** be included on the TOS.

A statement entailing what these fees are should accompany the TOS.

- Rental vehicles must be treated the same as state-owned vehicles. **Only state employees and officers may travel in the rented vehicle.** Non-state individuals such as volunteers, spouses, and children should not be passengers in a rented vehicle unless they are involved in the conduct of business which is in the scope of employment of the traveler.
- If the traveler is traveling over 100 miles per day, put the total number of miles in cell B5 (ex. 150 miles traveled in one day, enter “150” in cell B5).
 - If in that same trip the traveler will travel to other approved locations and the mileage is less than 100 miles per day, the total number of miles to be traveled to those shorter distance locations should be placed in cell B6.
 - **While the TOS does not have to be utilized for trips under 100 miles per day, the total estimated number of miles to be traveled are necessary to obtain the true cost for the least expensive option to be determined.**
 - No other miles should be claimed on the travel voucher unless an unforeseen event occurred after completing the TOS Calculator. If a privately-owned vehicle is used and the mileage shown on the original calculation differs from that claimed on the travel voucher, a revised TOS must be completed so the TOS and travel voucher reflect the same mileage.
- Travel routes must be planned based on the shortest distance to be traveled. If an alternate route is taken, the traveler can only claim reimbursement for the shortest route. Travel may begin at the traveler’s home and not the official duty station based on time of travel and also points of travel.
- Gasoline prices claimed on the TOS must be documented using Gasbuddy.com

Receipts

Please refer to the specific areas within this section for details and exceptions concerning when receipts are required to be reimbursed for travel expenses. The procedures for recording and documenting expenses are also provided throughout this section. Generally, receipts are required for the following items:

Receipts are required for:

- Lodging
- Business Telephone Calls
- Registration Fees
- Rental Cars
- If over \$10.00:
 1. Taxi
 2. Gasoline (Rental Car)
 3. Parking Fees
 - Hotel
 - Airport
 - Tolls
 - Other Fees

Tips

- Meals - The actual amount of tips paid up to 20% of the daily actual or allowed meal amount, whichever is less, will be reimbursed.
- Taxis/Shuttles - Tips shall not exceed 20% of the fee.
- Baggage Handling - Tips should be limited to a reasonable amount (\$1.00 per bag).

In-State Meals

Receipts are not required for meals. To be reimbursed for meals, an overnight stay (Hotel/Motel or Relative) is required. If you depart from your duty station prior to 6:00 a.m., please state "Early Departure" to obtain breakfast amount. If you arrive back at your duty station after 8:00 p.m., please state "Late Arrival" to obtain dinner amount. Each employee must pay for his/her meal costs and then request reimbursement. Meal costs within the employee's duty station are not reimbursable regardless of early and/or late departures. Report actual amounts spent on each meal (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner).

Please refer to the Federal Per Diem Converted Rates link on the next page for travel reimbursement amounts. If the in-state location you are looking for is not included in the table, then the reimbursement amount is **\$41.00**

The high cost areas for Mississippi are as follows:

- **Oxford - \$46.00 (October 2017 – July 2018)**
- **Oxford - \$51.00 (August 2018 – September 2018)**
- **Southaven - \$51.00**
- **Starkville - \$46.00**

Meal reimbursement requests that are not associated with overnight stay will not be reimbursed.

Out-of -State Meals

Individuals will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals not to exceed the DFA approved rate for the destination of travel. (Click this link <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/media/7320/2018-2019-converted-rates.pdf> to see the Domestic Meal Reimbursement Rate Table.)

The attached link to DFA's website will direct you to the updated Domestic Meal Reimbursement Rates for high cost areas in each state. If you cannot find the city you are looking for, locate the county and use the amount listed in the far-right column of the table. If neither the city nor county is listed, the maximum state reimbursement is **\$41.00** a day.

Lodging

Reimbursement for overnight lodging will be made when travel circumstances prevent departure and return travel in one day. Reimbursement for lodging expenses will be made for the amount paid, when supported by a receipt. When an individual has a choice, good judgment should be exercised in selecting the lodging to avoid unreasonable charges. General government rates should always be requested at the time the reservation is made or confirmed and again when checking into the hotel. If unacceptable motel accommodations are available at the work destination, the Mississippi Department of Education may approve travel to the nearest town where acceptable accommodations are available. If the nearest town is out-of-state, no out-of-state travel form will be required; however, approval must be obtained. An individual may elect to stay overnight with friends or relatives within a 30 to 40-mile radius of the worksite. Such lodging is not a reimbursable expense; however, travel to and from the lodging site and the work site in lieu of a motel expense shall be allowable.

All reimbursable expenses for lodging should be billed to the individual and not the Mississippi Department of Education. Lodging expense will not be reimbursable without a receipt, which is marked paid, showing a zero balance or accompanied by a credit card receipt. Only standard single room rates are allowable. If the individual utilizes or requires a rate other than the single occupancy rate, the hotel must certify the current rate for a single unit on the paid receipt. If two or more individuals share a motel room, separate invoices should be obtained which reports each individual's pro-rata share of the room costs. If the individual chooses to extend his or her stay for pleasure, he or she must note the leisure dates and hotel rate not authorized as official state business on the paid receipt. Lodging within the city of the individual's official place of residence is not an authorized expense.

Travel Voucher

All travel vouchers for in-state travel should be prepared in ink or typed and should be delivered to the Mississippi Department of Education. Only actual expenses shall be claimed on the travel voucher. Any claims above actual expenditures constitute fraud. In addition, any claim for reimbursement of an expense when the expense was paid by another constitutes fraud.

The first page of the travel voucher must show the travelers' name as it appears in the payroll system, the employees PID, dates of travel, provide a summary of the charges contained on the second and subsequent pages, and provide the account distribution for charging the trip. The MAGIC Internal Order should be reflected as part of the account distribution if the travel is to be charged to an Internal Order.

Second page of the travel voucher must show the points of travel and actual designations. If abbreviations are used, a key chart should accompany the travel voucher in order to show exact travel locations.

The travel voucher must be signed by the Traveler, Verifier, and Approver.

Responsibility of the Travel Verifier/Program Office

The individual signing as the Verifier must perform a review of all documentation for correctness, completion, coding, and funds availability.

Responsibility of Accounting Office

The Office of Accounting is responsible for verifying that State and Department procedures were followed; ensuring advances are settled within the required timeframe; solving issues that arise when budget errors occur; making corrections; and providing assistance to travelers when needed.

Travel Forms

These are official forms and cannot be altered.

- A. [Travel Authorization Form](#)
- B. [Travel Voucher](#)
- C. [Travel Voucher Checklist](#)
- D. [Trip Optimizer](#)