

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

Reimbursement Steps & Process
Training for Faculty, Students & Staff

Overview Reimbursements & Travel

- ▶ Review requirements
- ▶ Explain Business Purpose statements
- ▶ Why do we need to document
- ▶ What can we reimburse
- ▶ How can we get reimbursed faster

Why so many questions and requests for documents?

- ▶ Every transaction we process is subject to audit
- ▶ Transactions reimbursed by grant budgets subject to higher level of scrutiny
- ▶ We need to process each transaction as if it were going to be audited
- ▶ Risk of failure to use due diligence - If a grant was charged, we will be asked to provide a non-grant budget if the charge is not allowable on a grant, but acceptable on another non-grant budget
- ▶ Stewards of UW & State financial resources - responsible spending
- ▶ If the auditors deem the charge unacceptable they could ask the person who received the reimbursement to repay the money
- ▶ Avoid being on the front page of the newspaper, on the ethics violation website, fines of \$5,000 per incident....etc.

Travel Reimbursement Requirements

- ▶ Travel Authorization Form - before traveling
- ▶ Clear statement of business purpose of the trip - understandable to an auditor
- ▶ Travel Reimbursement form - what are we reimbursing, dates, etc
- ▶ Online Map for mileage - mileage from UW to destination for weekday travel
- ▶ Original Receipts are required
- ▶ Lodging - detail hotel folio required nightly room rate, taxes, etc
- ▶ Lodging over the per diem rate - need a complete explanation to justify the exception - may not always be able to pay - sometimes can only pay per diem
- ▶ Always need flight itinerary for traveled by air, even if paid by UW CTA
- ▶ All charges need to be reasonable

Travel Authorization

- ▶ Travel Authorization form is always required per APS 70.02 (6/14/2014)
- ▶ “All travel documents must be signed by an authorized person”
- ▶ Authorized approvers include:
 - ▶ General Fund budget - head of the organization or authorized designee
 - ▶ Grant or Contract budget - PI to whom G/C awarded or authorized designee or Department Chair/Director
- ▶ When the claimant/traveler is the authorized person - the approval signature must be that of the appropriate dean, director, chair or an authorized designee other than the claimant
- ▶ Travel authorization form is key for grant travel, as it provides documentation to auditors that the PI approved the charge to the grant/contract

Travel Authorization Form

- ▶ Complete BEFORE you travel
- ▶ Have PI/Faculty member/etc sponsoring the trip sign the form
- ▶ Know the total amount authorized for the trip
- ▶ Form location - SEFS Website - SEFS Tools - Forms - Travel Forms

Travel Authorization fields

- ▶ Today's date
- ▶ Traveler's name, phone & e-mail - fill in your name and contact info - key to let authorizer know how to get ahold of you if they have a question!
- ▶ Travel Destination - complete description of where you are going - Full name of conference/meeting including city and state or if you are traveling to a research site state "research site in City, State"
- ▶ Dates - what date do you leave and what date will you return
- ▶ Type of traveler - click the appropriate radio button
- ▶ Personal time - yes or no - adding personal time is fine, just needs to be documented correctly and must provide documentation

Personal Time - documenting

- ▶ Taking personal time is fine and allowed
- ▶ We are mandated to provide documentation that adding personal time to a UW business trip does not increase the cost to the UW.
- ▶ If your trip involves airfare, we need a comparison flight showing the airfare if you flew directly to the business site and returned to the UW immediately following the meeting/conference/etc.
- ▶ Any gaps in your travel i.e. hotel receipts, etc will require an explanation - because auditors will assume personal time was taken.
- ▶ Report the date you entered into personal time and the date you returned to UW business - can not claim lodging or meal per diem while on personal time
- ▶ If the conference ends at noon and you are taking personal time starting the next day - you can not be reimbursed for lodging that night because you would have returned home right after the conference.

Purpose of Travel /

Explain the Business purpose of the trip

- ▶ Check the appropriate box
- ▶ A clear statement of the purpose of the trip should explain where the person went, why they went there and how the trip benefitted the budget that was charged, especially when charging a grant
- ▶ Avoid vague statements: “research for dissertation” invites questions from auditors - was this at all related to the grant that was charged?
- ▶ Clear, understandable business purpose statements should provide enough information that the reviewer/auditor will not have further questions about the reason the traveler went on the trip.
- ▶ Examples - Travel to Colville, WA 3/14 - 3/16; to collect soil samples, measure tree circumferences and ... for the XYZ project.
- ▶ If meeting with individuals, list the names and affiliations - how the meeting is related to or benefits the project.

Travel elements requested

- ▶ Check the box for the expenses for which you are requesting the PI/budget owner to approve
- ▶ Provide an estimate of the total cost - PI signature indicates this is the amount they are prepared to reimburse - if you turn in receipts for a higher amount, we will ask the PI/budget owner for their approval
- ▶ If you are seeking an per diem advance - check the box and indicate the amount you are requesting. Per diem advances must be reconciled and if there is a balance i.e. you drew more than the receipts total - you will have to write a check to the UW for the difference
- ▶ Authorization - PI completes and signs

Before you leave

- ▶ Complete Travel Authorization form and get PI signature
- ▶ Check the lodging and meal per diem for the destination
- ▶ <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877> US GSA Per Diem link
- ▶ WHY? To avoid unpleasant surprises!
- ▶ Need to know what amount the PI/budget owner is supporting
- ▶ We can only reimburse the per diem rate - some hotels will accept the per diem rate if you disclose that you are there on Univ of Washington travel
- ▶ If not - we might be able to pay higher, if we can properly document - but that requires checking in advance!

Travel Reimbursement Worksheet

Roadmap for Financial Services staff

- ▶ The completed reimbursement form helps identify the expenses for which the traveler is seeking reimbursement. Legible & Include budget number
- ▶ Provides date and time traveler entered and exited travel status - necessary for meal per diem payment - also indicates which meals they are requesting
- ▶ Helps provide the roadmap for the reimbursement - a checklist to reconcile the ER, verify all allowable expenses are processed
- ▶ Need to document when personal time is taken on the trip - fully allowable, just need to identify when the traveler started and ended personal time and verify that the cost to the university was not higher due to the personal time.
- ▶ Must explain gaps in dates - lodging, etc. was it personal time or did they camp near the research site, stay with friends near the destination?

Travel Reimbursement Worksheet - fields

- ▶ Fill in your name and click the radio button with your status/type of claim
UW employee or student
- ▶ Travel Authorization button is a reminder to include both forms
- ▶ Travel Destination - check the appropriate radio button
- ▶ Write in the budget number provided by the PI on the Travel Auth form
- ▶ Check the Personal time button - yes or no and indicate the dates you entered and exited personal time - we ask again in case your plans changed to add or delete personal time.
- ▶ Direct deposit is the recommended method for reimbursement if you are on payroll; payment is much faster using direct deposit

Reimbursement worksheet cont.

- ▶ If you are not on payroll or don't have direct deposit your check will come to the school and you will pick it up at the front desk. Slower processing time
- ▶ Reimbursement checks to UW employees & students are not mailed unless there are extenuating circumstances i.e. graduating and leaving campus immediately
- ▶ e-mail address needed if FS staff have questions - need your contact info most of the delays in reimbursement are caused by incomplete information
- ▶ Fill in the date that you completed the reimbursement worksheet
- ▶ Click purpose of travel
- ▶ Fill in the amounts for which you are seeking reimbursement under the appropriate expense category

Trip Information

- ▶ In the “Date” field, enter the date that you entered travel status
- ▶ “From”, is the location where you departed - typically UW campus
- ▶ “To” is the destination where you are going
- ▶ Time - “Departure” - what time did you enter travel status, what time did you leave your residence or office - exact time you entered travel status
- ▶ Time - “Return” - what time did you return home or to your office - exact time you exited travel status
- ▶ Lodging name - name of hotel where you stayed and have a receipt/folio to be reimbursed - if you camped, provide the name of the campsite
- ▶ Per Diem - check the box for the meals you are claiming for the day
- ▶ “Lodging” amount of the hotel charge
- ▶ Shared - check this box if you shared a room with another UW traveler: list name of person in the Comments box

Documentation cont

- ▶ Original receipts are required in SEFS. If the receipt was lost, a perjury statement is required for reimbursement - Internal Audit recently informed us that external auditors are not accepting perjury statements in lieu of original receipts
- ▶ The hotel folio - statement showing the itemized charges; room, tax, etc is required and needs to show the traveler paid the bill and balance due \$0
- ▶ Check lodging per diem rates before travel - verify hotel charges
- ▶ If the lodging exceeds per diem rates for the travel destination, we need a complete explanation to use an exception - the explanation must be provided in the ER - without reasonable explanation can only pay per diem max + tax
- ▶ Exception - Conference hotel - did the traveler stay in the conference hotel(s) must provide the Conference Agenda/Program in the ER documentation
- ▶ Exception - lowest cost overall - sufficient information, that can be verified and proven must be provided to document this exception

Mileage – UW Policies

Documentation

- ▶ Online maps are required for mileage reimbursement showing the start address and destination address
- ▶ Mileage Monday – Friday must be from Duty Station – UW address
- ▶ Can only claim mileage from home if traveler went into travel status on Saturday, Sunday or a holiday – non work day.
- ▶ FYI – Sometimes when we submit mileage logs, the Travel Office asks us to provide an online map
- ▶ Mileage in lieu of airfare may not be reimbursable – requirement to travel via the least cost method, unless we can document clear reasons why the traveler needed to drive, i.e. multiple stop at research sites from start to destination. Otherwise, we can only reimburse the value of airfare

Documentation cont.

- ▶ Travel by airline - flight itinerary must be included to document the entry and exit from travel status - even if traveler is not seeking reimbursement for airfare
- ▶ Meals paid for others, must include the names of individuals - if they were also in travel status, they can not claim meal per diem for the meal
- ▶ Conference registration copy is required for travel to conferences - key information is whether meals were provided. Meal per diem can not be claimed for meals that were provided at a conference
- ▶ Link to conference agenda - or PDF must be provided if not available on a website.
- ▶ Can never reimburse membership to professional organization on a grant budget - if you approve this reimbursement a non-grant budget must be provided.
- ▶ Meetings - please include a copy of the e-mail documenting the time, place, etc. to provide documentation business purpose

Travel Reimbursement worksheet

- ▶ Amounts filled in for travel expense categories
- ▶ Multi day travel is listed in Trip Information
- ▶ Use comments section to explain gaps in dates, or other needed information
- ▶ Total expenses and fill in the estimated total
- ▶ Per Diem Advance - if you received a Per Diem advance enter that figure
- ▶ If the receipts are less than the advance, write a check to the UW for the balance
- ▶ The total, helps the FS staff process the reimbursement and quickly identify any discrepancies.

Reimbursement exceeds Amount approved by PI on Travel Auth Form

- ▶ We use the Travel Authorization form to show that the PI approved the charge on their budget
- ▶ When the total of receipts submitted by the traveler exceeds the amount authorized by the PI, we will add the PI as an approver in the Ariba Travel Expense module
- ▶ Needed in the event of an audit - to document the PI approved the charge on their budget.

Getting reimbursed faster

- ▶ When travelers turn in all of their documentation, forms that are clear, complete and signed
- ▶ All receipts are turned in
- ▶ Conference agendas included
- ▶ When the Financial Services staff have all the needed documentation, they can process a reimbursement in the time it takes to send 3 or 4 e-mails asking questions and seeking documents.
- ▶ Scan your own documentation to pdf for the reimbursement, forms, receipts, etc.

Regular reimbursements

- ▶ Need the completed reimbursement form, signed by budget owner/PI
- ▶ Make sure writing is legible & includes budget number
- ▶ Key to have clear descriptions of the item(s) purchased what is it and why is it needed - especially for grants
- ▶ Need original receipts or perjury statement will be required. Note recent statement from Internal Audit regarding Federal Auditors not accepting perjury statements in lieu of receipts
- ▶ Again Documentation is our friend
- ▶ Objective to fully explain and provide a clear purpose for the item purchased, so in an audit everything is clear to the auditor
- ▶ Make sure items are allowable - especially for charges to grants
- ▶ Clear, concise descriptions are key to establish what is allowed

Expense Reimbursement Form

- ▶ Fill in your name - netid - phone and e-mail
- ▶ Address is optional if you are UW student or employee - include the address if you have extenuating circumstances - for which we need to mail the check.
- ▶ Your e-mail and phone info is essential so FS staff can contact you if they have questions about the reimbursement
- ▶ "Purchased from" - name of the company, store, vendor from which the item(s) were purchased
- ▶ "Items Purchased" - complete description of exactly what you purchased, receipts are frequently not clear or obvious
- ▶ "Business purpose" - what is the use of the items what value does this purchase provide?
- ▶ "Cost" - the amount for which you are seeking reimbursement

Explanations

- ▶ Purchased from helps us match up receipts to the reimbursement form
- ▶ Items purchased - we are required to explain what was purchased
- ▶ Business purpose - very important to explain how we are using the items - what value to the University
- ▶ Example - here in SEFS we purchase a lot of coin rolls for soil samples - at face value an auditor would say "WHAT" but with an explanation the purchase makes sense
- ▶ We just need to provide the rest of the story

Food – Meetings, seminars, etc

- ▶ When charging food/meals/refreshments to a budget other than 64-XX must include a Food Approval Form
- ▶ Reimbursements for food - must include a list of Attendees
- ▶ Field trip reimbursements, please include the course number & Course Instructor/faculty member signature
- ▶ Charges reimbursed on a School budget, need the Director's approval/signature

Equipment

- ▶ Reimbursements for items that are Equipment - i.e. over \$2,000 must be brought in to be tagged before we can process the reimbursement.
- ▶ Need the serial number to enter the item in the Equipment System

What we need & what we want to avoid

- ▶ Obtain clear descriptions and documentation for reimbursements
- ▶ Each transaction has sufficient information to satisfy an auditor - questions are all answered and charges are documented.
- ▶ Poorly constructed reimbursements invite further audit inquiries
- ▶ If someone is reimbursed and the expense is not allowable, auditors can ask the school to provide a non-grant budget to cover the expense or if the item can't be charged to the University, the person can be asked to repay the university for the item(s), - depends on what is reimbursed.
- ▶ When in doubt, I call Internal Audit and ask for their opinion before processing a reimbursement