



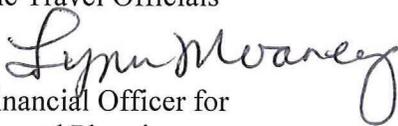
United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the Chief
Financial Officer

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Washington, DC
20250

TO: Agency Chief Financial Officers
Senior Accountable Travel Officials

FROM: Lynn Moaney 
Associate Chief Financial Officer for
Financial Policy and Planning

SEP 09 2016

SUBJECT: Approval Authority Guidance for Actual Expense above Per Diem

The revised Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR) published on December 8, 2015 included policy related to approval authority for actual expenses above the established per diem rate; however, it did not establish approval level thresholds for actual expense above the per diem rate.

Effective immediately, Agency or Staff Office Heads may delegate the authority to approve actual expense up to 150 percent above the per diem rate. The Agency or Staff Office Head may delegate approval authority to the Agency or Staff Office Senior Accountable Travel Official for actual expense requests between 150 and 300 percent for all hazard related emergencies, such as disease, fire, natural disasters, etc. Any non-emergency actual expenses request above 150 percent, not to exceed 300 percent, must be approved by the Agency or Staff Office Head and may not be delegated. As stated in the Federal Travel Regulation, there is no authority to exceed 300 percent. Agencies can elect to have the designated approving official or Agency/Staff Office Head authorize/approve the request through the electronic travel system (ETS), and/or sign the attached, *Request for Actual Expense above Per Diem* form; the signed request form must be uploaded in the ETS.

According to the ATR, an Agency Head is the head of an organizational unit of the Department who reports to an Under Secretary or the head of an administrative staff office who reports to the Secretary and the Inspector General. A Staff Office is a Departmental Administrative office whose head reports to the Assistant Secretary for Administration or officials within the Office of the Secretary.

As stated in the ATR, approving officials must ensure requests for actual expense reimbursement is made in advance of travel, to the fullest extent possible. Actual expense reimbursement may also be approved after travel is completed ('post approval') when the approving official determines one of the following occurred: an emergency situation where a request for prior approval was not possible; or unanticipated, unusual, and/or extenuating circumstances caused necessary expenses to be much greater than the authorized per diem allowance.

This guidance supersedes previous *Approval Authority Guidance for Actual Expense above Per Diem* memoranda, dated May 26, 2016 and September 8, 2016.

If you have any questions, please contact Peggy Javery, Director for the Fiscal Policy Division, at 202-720-1307 or Peggy.Javery@cfo.usda.gov.

Attachment

cc: Travel Policy Users Group

Request for Actual Expense above Per Diem

Traveler name (print or type): _____

Basic Information

Agency: _____

Office: _____

Per Diem Rate: _____

Lodging Only: _____ or

Lodging plus M&IE: _____ or

M&IE Only: _____

Actual Rate Being Requested: _____

Percent over Per Diem Rate: _____

Steps Taken to Find Lodging within Per Diem

Explanation of Why Trip Cannot Be Delayed

Decision (circle one): Approved Denied

Signature¹: _____

Date: _____

¹ Agency or Staff Office Heads may delegate the authority to approve actual expense up to 150 percent above the per diem rate. Requests for actual expenses above 150 percent, not to exceed 300 percent, must be approved by the Agency Head and may not be delegated. As stated in the Federal Travel Regulation, there is no authority to exceed 300 percent.