



Travel Procedure

Related Policy: [Board Policy, Chapter IV, Section 140 - Official Travel](#)
Department: Business Office

Purpose

Flathead Valley Community College is committed to supporting the professional growth and operational efficiency of its employees through travel that directly benefits the organization. This travel policy is designed to ensure that all travel arrangements are conducted efficiently, cost-effectively, and in compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and company policies. The policy outlines procedures and guidelines for booking, approval, and reimbursement of travel expenses, ensuring transparency, accountability, and the responsible use of company resources.

Procedure

This travel procedure establishes the guidelines for employees conducting business travel on behalf of FVCC. It ensures that travel is planned, executed, and reimbursed in a manner that is consistent with the organization's policies, fiscally responsible, and compliant with applicable laws and regulations. The following procedures provide detailed instructions on how to request, approve, document, and manage travel expenses to support organizational objectives while maintaining accountability and transparency. All employees are expected to adhere to these guidelines when traveling as representatives of FVCC. Employees should conduct travel and the ensuing expenses and are written in accordance with [FVCC Board Policy, Chapter IV, section 140](#) and the [Montana State Code of Annotated Title 2, Chapter 18, Part 501-512](#).

Permission to Travel Form

A *Permission to Travel* form, documenting the business need to travel, must be completed and approved two weeks prior to the date of travel. Reimbursement of mileage will be considered travel and require a *Permission to Travel* form. FVCC will not reimburse or assume any costs associated with unapproved travel.

Employee travel is authorized when there are financial resources available to travel, related to responsibilities of the employee, and is approved by the employee's supervisor and relevant Executive Staff member. If the travel is funded by a grant, the grant accountant must also approve the travel and ensure the regulations of the granting agency are followed. Once all approval signatures are obtained the form is submitted to the Business Office. When the Business Office communicates the receipt of the appropriately completed and authorized *Permission to Travel* form, employees are free to start making travel arrangements (lodging,

airfare, vehicles, etc.). Trips should be scheduled to avoid unnecessary backtracking and overlapping.

Travel should be in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible that still allows for the purpose of the trip to be accomplished. Whenever possible, employees will utilize technology (i.e., Go to Meeting, Skype, webinars) to interface with others and reduce expenditures as recommended by the State Legislature. Only relevant personnel shall attend required travel when FVCC is the funding source.

Employees are required to follow all College policies and procedures as a professional representative of FVCC when traveling.

Travel Expense Form

The *Travel Expense* form documents and summarizes all costs incurred by the employee related to that trip. All expenses relating to the travel must be entered on this form including lodging, airfare, and registration costs that may have been purchased prior to the travel dates. Conference agendas must be attached to the form and meal per diem is not allowed to be claimed for meals offered. Breakfast cannot be claimed as per diem if the hotel includes breakfast with the lodging cost, this includes continental breakfasts.

The *Travel Expense* form and copies of all required itemized receipts must be submitted with budgetary and supervisory signatures. The form must be completed within 30 days of the trip, otherwise special approval by the President is required for reimbursement and payment.

When traveling in the month of June, the form must be submitted prior to June 30 to ensure it is posted to the appropriate fiscal year. Employee travel reimbursements will be placed in the employee's campus mail.

Lodging

Lodging and related fees/taxes should be paid using an FVCC Purchasing Card (Travel purchasing cards can be checked out from the Academic Affairs Office for employees who do not have one.) A copy of the itemized receipt from the lodging is required to be submitted with the *Travel Expense Report*. Employees must utilize the best available and cost effective rate for single occupancy. The College does qualify for State Government rates and employees should carry FVCC identification for verification. Airbnb and VRBO (Vacation Rental by Owner) is acceptable if evidence is provided that it is more cost effective and an FVCC purchasing card is used to make the reservation and pay for the stay. No personal charges or meals may be paid for with an FVCC purchasing card and should be taken care of separately at check out. All receipts for charges on a lodging bill, including personal ones, shall be submitted upon return.

Airfare

Airline tickets can be purchased once travel has been approved via the authorized *Permission to Travel* form, as communicated by the Business Office and shall be charged to an FVCC

Purchasing Card. This applies to ticket purchases made through an agent, purchased directly from an airline, or purchased from an online source. Standard weight luggage fees for one bag may be incurred. Travel insurance should not be purchased unless traveling to an international destination. An employee is not to use personal funds for reimbursable travel related expenses, with the exception of per diem meals.

Vehicles

Employees are strongly encouraged to utilize College owned vehicles for authorized travel when available. To request usage of an FVCC vehicle, complete a *Vehicle Request* form and submit with the *Permission to Travel* form (required if expenses are associated with the trip). If an FVCC vehicle is not available, reimbursement will be authorized for the use of an employee's private vehicle at the current mileage rate set by the State of Montana. Employees using FVCC vehicles in an approved travel status will obey all moving vehicle laws and speed limits. The use of a college vehicle is restricted to employee or authorized student use only. Employees will provide a current copy of their driver's license prior to using a college owned vehicle. It is the employee's responsibility to complete the *Vehicle Usage* form to track the mileage and record the condition of the vehicle. This form will be provided when keys are picked up from the Business Office. Personal credit cards or FVCC Purchasing Cards are not to be used to purchase gas for College vehicles. A College gas card will be provided in each vehicle with instructions for use. College purchasing cards are not to be used to purchase gas for private vehicles.

For safety, liability, and security reasons, the transportation of inventory or equipment in personal vehicles is strongly discouraged. All inventory and equipment should be transported using approved FVCC vehicles or designated shipping methods to ensure proper handling and accountability. Use of personal vehicles for this purpose may result in loss, damage, or liability issues that will not be covered by FVCC.

The college is not responsible for any damages that may occur to a private vehicle while traveling on college business. Reimbursement rates for private vehicle mileage are defined by state statute. The *Permission to Travel* and *Travel Expense* forms contain the rates. The current mileage rate can be found at this [Montana Association of Counties website](#).

A map print out (Google maps, MapQuest, etc.) must be submitted with the travel forms verifying the mileage when private vehicles are used. Mileage for personal errands, i.e., shopping, movies, entertainment, are not reimbursable. All mileage reimbursements are calculated from the College's address, unless the distance from home is shorter, to the specific destination's address.

The use of a Kalispell area rental vehicle must be approved by the supervisor and then arranged through the Business Office.

Mileage reimbursement is limited to travel expenses that exceed expected commuting costs, and it requires prior approval for business travel away from campus.

- Local mileage is generally not reimbursable unless it is directly related to an ongoing employment obligation and is pre-approved by the Executive Team member.

- Local mileage excludes travel between FVCC campus buildings, within Flathead Valley County, within 30 miles of the employee's primary campus, or commuting between FVCC and the employee's residence.
- Local mileage for work-related errands or other tasks is not reimbursable.

Employees with approved regular mileage are required to complete and submit the *Flathead and Lincoln County Mileage Log* form on a monthly basis with supervisor signature approval. A map print out must be attached detailing mileage.

Mileage reimbursements must be turned in within 30 days of travel.

Personal Travel Associated with Business Travel

If the employee is authorized by their supervisor to combine a personal component of travel with a business trip, additional costs associated with personal travel must be paid by the employee at their own expense. Absolutely no personal component of travel is to be charged to an FVCC purchasing card.

Documentation must be attached to show no additional cost is being paid by the College. For example: If the employee is staying in a location for additional days he/she must print the flight cost for the that would have occurred otherwise. Single occupancy (1 person) for employee lodging is reimbursable; costs for additional individuals must be paid by the employee.

International Travel

Any travel outside of the 50 states is considered international travel. Any international travel and meal per diem must be pre-approved by the supervisor, relevant Executive Staff member and the President. All regular travel procedures apply to international travel. When traveling out of the country, additional trip insurance coverage can be purchased for rental vehicles, etc.

All wire transfers and travel-related accommodations or arrangements for international travel must be finalized at least 14 days prior to departure.

Conference and Registration Fees

Conference registration fees are to be paid with an FVCC purchasing card once approved. Special conference events of a personal nature, such as entertainment, are not reimbursable and must be paid by the employee personally. When trips are canceled that include a prepaid fee, it is the employee's responsibility to apply for a timely refund. Early bird conference rates should be taken advantage of whenever possible.

Meal Per Diem

A meal per diem allowance may be obtained in advance for employees in travel status or the employee can submit for reimbursement on a *Travel Expense* form.

Meal Per Diem advances are submitted via the *Permission to Travel* form. Ideally ten business days are needed for processing these. FVCC Purchasing cards are not to be used to pay for per diem meals. The meal per diem rates have been established by the State of Montana based on a fixed rate and travel times. Employees do not need to submit receipts for in-state and out-of-state meal per diem. Employees may not claim per diem for meals that they do not utilize, or meals that are included in/or provided by the lodging, conference or meeting that the employee is attending.

To be eligible for meal per diem while traveling on College business, FVCC follows Montana State Law (2-18-502 MCA) which states that in order to claim an allowance for a meal, an employee must be in a travel status for more than three continuous hours within one of the following time ranges and be at least 15 miles from campus or home, whichever is closer.

Meal per diem times and rates can be found in Montana State Law (2-18-501 MCA). Current rates can be found on the State of Montana's [website](#):

Travel is considered to be out-of-state from the time a flight is boarded to a destination outside of Montana. Travel status for the airline begins 1 1/2 hours before the flight departure time.

Miscellaneous Expenses

Some miscellaneous business expenses associated with business travel are reimbursable, including unanticipated but approved items. Individual expense items must be supported itemized receipts and included on the *Travel Expense* form. If an itemized receipt is not submitted, no reimbursement will be provided.

Examples of allowable miscellaneous expenses include taxi fares and baggage fees.

Non-reimbursable expenses include personal telephone charges, alcohol/food charges, non-meal or cash tips, airline WiFi, exercise facility charges, hotel movie charges, and other expenses.

Employees are permitted to provide tips for services such as dining, transportation, and other travel-related expenses. However, tips should not exceed 20% of the total bill or service charge. Employees are encouraged to use discretion and adhere to customary tipping practices in the location where the service is provided.

Relevant Policies, Forms, or Resources

Please visit the FVCC [website](#) for all related travel forms.

[Montana State Code of Annotated Title 2, Chapter 18, Part 501-512](#)

History

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- Effective: 09/16/2024
- Last Revised:
- Last Reviewed:
- Next Review: