Travel Policy FAQs

When does the revised policy take effect?

The revised policy ‘officially’ takes effect for travel starting 10-1-2010. However, you can use this policy for any travel you have scheduled prior to that or for any outstanding travel expense reports that you may have.

What is a per diem?

A per diem allowance is a daily payment based on government calculated rates instead of reimbursement for actual expenses.

Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) are now reimbursed on a per diem basis. What is the definition of M&IE?

Meals are defined as expense for breakfast, lunch, dinner and related tips and taxes. They exclude alcoholic beverages and entertainment expenses.

Chapter 300, Part 300-3, in the Federal Travel Regulation (www.gsa.gov/ftr), under Per Diem Allowance, describes Incidental Expenses as:
A. Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel maids, stewards or stewardesses and others on ships, and hotel servants in foreign countries.
B. Transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken, if suitable meals cannot be obtained at the temporary duty site.
C. Mailing cost associated with filing travel vouchers and payment of Government charge card billings.

How do I find what the M&IE per diem allowance is for the city I am traveling to?


Non-continental US (e.g., Hawaii) and foreign meal expenses will also be reimbursed on a per diem basis. Rates may be found at: http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/perdiemrates.html

What if a city is not listed on the CONUS Per Diem website?

If a city is not listed, check to ensure that the county within which it is located is also not listed. Visit the National Association of Counties website at www.naco.org to determine the county a destination is located in. If the city is not listed, but the county is, then the per diem rate is the rate for that entire county. If the city and the county are not listed, then that area is considered to be a Standard CONUS location which is currently $46 for meals and incidental expenses.
If some of my meals are provided for me during my travel (i.e. by the hotel I am staying at or by the conference I am attending) can I still claim the full daily M&IE per diem allowance?

No, meals provided by others should not be included with the daily per diem requests. This includes meals provided by a host, hotel (e.g., complimentary breakfast) or included in conference/seminar fees.

If I can’t claim the full daily M&IE per diem allowance because some of my meals are provided, how much can I claim?

The government calculates a breakdown of the M&IE rates for breakfast, lunch, dinner and incidentals. The breakdown can be found at www.gsa.gov/mie or http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=114&menu_id=81.

On the day I travel to my destination and on the day I return, I won’t be traveling for the whole day. Can I still claim the full daily M&IE per diem allowance?

No, only 75% of the per diem rate is allowed for the first and last day of travel. According to Section 4a of the AURA Travel Policy it is applied as follows:

If your entire travel is more than 12 hours but less than 24 hours your allowance is 75% of the applicable M&IE rate.
When travel is 24 hours or more:
The day of departure is 75% of the applicable M&IE rate.
Full days of travel 100% of the applicable M&IE rate.
Last day of travel 75% of the applicable M&IE rate.
Note: it does not matter what time you depart or return.

Now that AURA is reimbursing for M&IE based upon per diem, are receipts required?

No, receipts for M&IE are not required (except as noted below in ‘Buying meals for other travelers’).

Buying Meals for other travelers:
What if I purchase a meal for someone who is traveling with me?

It’s understandable that situations may arise when one individual, for convenience purposes, needs to “pick up the check.” Purchasing a meal for a fellow traveler is an allowable expense for which you can be reimbursed, however the per diem allowance for that meal no longer applies. That expense will be reimbursed based upon the actual cost. In this instance, you MUST provide a receipt along with documentation as to who (first and last name) you purchased the meal for. Of course your fellow traveler is not allowed to claim that meal portion of the per diem value for that day of travel. Also, the actual expense must not exceed the sum of the per diem that would have been requested by each individual. Additionally, meals purchased for others who are not on official AURA travel will not be reimbursed.
What receipts are required for travel reimbursement?

As stated above, receipts for M&IE reimbursed based upon per diem are not required. All other travel expenses reimbursed on an actual basis must be submitted. These include, but are not limited to airfare, car rental, lodging, parking fees and taxis to and from the airport. Additionally, if you claim mileage for the use of your personal vehicle you must provide the to/from, purpose of trip, rate and total number of miles traveled. An online printout of the distance traveled from Google Maps or Mapquest is recommended.

Due to comments rendered as a result of recent reviews by NSF, DCAA and Independent Audits, documentation in the following areas is now required. When traveling to conferences, workshops, or meetings, inclusion of the agenda with your Travel Request will support the purpose and dates of the trip.

For those traveling internationally, inclusion of documentation for the rate used to convert expenses from foreign denominations to USD will support the amounts being requested for reimbursement. A useful site is www.oanda.com (Historical Rates).

I didn’t spend as much as the M&IE allowance provides, do I have to claim the entire allowable expense?

No, the government per diem allowance is the maximum that can be reimbursed. If you find that you spent less than this allowance, you can claim less that the maximum. We encourage travelers to be judicious in their spending for M&IE. Those of you who must expend your travel against accounts with limited budgets will no doubt see the advantage of this practice.