



# Department of Veterans Affairs

## Financial Policy

### Volume XIV

#### Travel

### Chapter 7

#### Local Travel

Approved:

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## 0701 Overview

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial policies and procedures regarding local travel. The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), as prescribed under [FTR Chapters 300-304](#), provides authority to agencies to define a local radius for official business travel either at or in the vicinity of the official duty station within which per diem will not be allowed.

Key points covered in this chapter:

- All local travel claims are required to be processed in VA’s travel system;
- The Financial Service Center (FSC) will cancel local travel claims not submitted and approved within 45 days of the travel end date
- Supervisory approval is required in advance of conducting local travel activities;
- Employees who are authorized to perform official travel either within their official duty station’s defined local area, or within 50 miles of an employee’s residence, will be reimbursed authorized local travel expenses in excess of their normal daily commute;
- Reimbursement of expenses while in local travel status is based upon actual costs incurred not upon per diem and the reimbursement of actual cost incurred (for lodging and/or meal(s)) may only be authorized in very limited situations; and
- A formal VA travel system authorization may be required for certain types of local travel expenses (e.g., transportation expense such as a rental car, or a lodging exception ([FTR §301-50.3](#))).

## 0702 Revisions

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
0704 Roles and Responsibilities	Updated delegation of authority roles and responsibilities relating to approval of the exception for lodging and meal expenses in the local area.	OFP (047G)	Secretary of VA (SECVA) Memorandum, “Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences”.	October 2021
070505 Authorizing Lodging and Meal Expenses in the Local Area as “Necessary Expenses” of Training.	Updated delegation of authority roles and responsibilities relating to approval of the exception for lodging and meal expenses in the local area.	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, “Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences”.	October 2021

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
0707 Rescissions	Rescinded VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 7, Local Travel, June 2018	OFP (047G)	General Update	October 2021
Appendix C: Procedures for Requesting Approval for the Necessary Expenses of Training	Updated designated positions with authority to approve necessary expenses of training in the Sample Memo.	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".	October 2021
Various	Reformatted to new policy format and completed five-year update.	OFP (047G)	Reorganized chapter layout.	June 2018
0701 Overview	Updated to include key topics.	OFP (047G)	Leadership organizational change.	June 2018
0703 Definitions	Added Commuting Cost definition. Updated definitions and removed definitions not under Section 0705.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018
0704 Roles and Responsibilities	Updated to reflect revised policy adding Approving Officials and Employee Travelers.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018
0705 Policies	Consolidated duplicate policy guidance under this section. Re-organized subsections. Added FTR references.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018
070501	Clarified treatment of transit benefits in determining excess cost of daily commute.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018
070502	Changed the VACO local defined area to a 50 mile radius. Clarified either a defined local area, or a 50 mile radius from an employee's residence is local travel.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
070504	Updated travel claim is the reimbursement method for mass transportation, tokens, and metro cards for local travel.	OFP (047G)	VA Forms 3079 and 4530 obsolete.	June 2018
070505	Modified to require the Assistant Secretary for HRA to concur the training is a bona-fide GETA training event.	OFP (047G)	Leadership request.	June 2018
070506	Clarified reimbursable meal expenses.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	June 2018
070507	Clarified reimbursable meal expenses.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	June 2018
070508	Added FSC will cancel claims not approved within 45 days of the travel end date, requiring approval to re-establish claim. Clarified acceptable evidence for POV ground mileage is required to be attached to the travel claim. Revised receipt requirement for a local meal if more than \$75.	OFP (047G)	Leadership request. General policy update.	June 2018
0706 Authorities and References	Updated list.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018
0707 Rescissions	Rescinded Vol XIV Ch. 7, Local Travel, August 2017	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018
0708 Questions	Updated contact information	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	June 2018
Appendix A	Replaced previous Appendix A with Revision History.	OFP (047G)	Improve readability.	June 2018
Appendix B	Removed VA Form 3079, Replaced with previous Appendix A Local Travel Examples	OFP (047G)	VA Form obsolete; organizational change.	June 2018

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Appendix C	Removed VA Form 4530, replaced with previous Appendix D; modified to require the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration to concur the training is a bona-fide GETA training event; and added table of costs.	OFP (047G) CTCCS	VA Form obsolete; Leadership request; organizational change.	June 2018

Reference [Appendix A, Revision History](#) for listing of previous changes.

### 0703 Definitions

**Commuting Cost** – Commuting costs are expenses incurred while traveling between an employee’s residence and his/her official worksite/duty station. Commuting costs are calculated on a daily basis and are based on the method of transportation used for that day’s commute.

**Employee Residence** – The location from which an employee regularly commutes to their official duty station.

**Geographic Boundaries** – A specifically defined physical area establishing limits for local travel purposes.

**Local Area** – An area, either within an official duty station’s defined local mileage radius or geographic boundaries, or travel within a 50 mile radius of an employee’s residence. For virtual employees the local area is either, within 50 miles of their residence (whether designated as their official station, or not), or the defined local area of the official duty station assigned as their virtual mobile office.

**Local Travel Claim** – Electronic request, supported by documentation and receipts when applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official local travel.

**Mileage Radius** – A measurement used to establish the local travel area associated with an official duty station, instead of using geographic boundaries. In the case of an employee’s residence, or when a virtual employee’s official duty station is their home, only a mileage radius is used to establish a local area.

**Official Duty Station** – The physical location, including the area defined as a mileage radius or by geographic boundaries, in which the employee’s permanent work assignment is situated.

**Temporary Duty (TDY) Official Travel** – Travel to an authorized alternate duty site away from an employee's official duty station defined local area.

**Travel Authorization** – Written or electronic travel orders outlining the authorized travel location, dates, and expenses to be reimbursed.

**Travel System** – The Government-contracted, end-to-end travel management service that automates and consolidates the Federal travel process in a self-service Web-centric environment, covering all aspects of official travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement and travel management reporting.

## 0704 Roles and Responsibilities

**The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration** is responsible for determining if an event is classified as a bona-fide training event as specified in [5 U.S.C. § 4101 \(4\) Definition of Training](#), and [5 U.S.C. § 410.404, Determining if a conference is a training activity](#).

**Deputy Secretary (DEPSEC), Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials (OKOs)** have the designated authority to approve the actual cost of lodging and/or meal expenses for employees in the local area when determined to be a “necessary expense” of a bona-fide Government Employee Training Act (GETA) training, under 5 U.S.C. § 4109(a)(2)(F) and 5 C.F.R. § 410.401. No further re-delegation is authorized.

**VA Field Facility Directors** and the **Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary (ADAS)** for Financial Policy in VA’s Central Office (VACO) will establish the local area for their respective official station in accordance with [Section 070502](#).

**Approving Officials** will take and complete required travel training every three years, be knowledgeable of the employee’s travel plans, and have the authority to approve travel authorizations and claims associated with local travel. In addition, Approving Officials will ensure all travel is approved and performed consistent with FTR, [FTR Chapters 300-304](#), VA travel policy and any other Department-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices).

**Travelers** will be knowledgeable of the FTR, VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices); minimize costs, ensure travel is approved in advance; arrange travel using VA’s travel system; comply with VA’s travel charge card program guidance in [VA Financial Policy Volume XVI Chapter 2, Government Travel](#)

[Charge Card Program](#), and submit local travel claims timely (reference [Section 070508](#)).

## 0705 Policies

### 070501 Normal Commute

- A. VA employees commute to and from their official station at their own expense. This applies to regular work days as well as non-work days (i.e., weekends or holidays), Civilian Board of Contract Appeals Decisions [15655-TRAV](#) and [16069-TRAV](#).
- B. When an employee's regularly scheduled duties involve assignments at multiple locations to which he or she commutes on a regular basis from his/her residence, the travel cost is not reimbursable (reference [Decision of the Comptroller General, B-181347, Mar. 2, 1977 \(Overtime--Travel Time\)](#), and [To Steve F. Heller, United States Department of Agriculture, B-175608, Jan. 22, 1973](#)).

For example, if an employee is regularly scheduled to perform work at their permanent duty station at a VA medical center on Monday and Tuesday, and is regularly scheduled to perform work at a Community Based Outreach Clinic on Wednesday through Friday, travel to both locations is considered a normal commuting expense and is not reimbursable.

Otherwise, for non-regularly scheduled alternate location travel, reference [Section 070502F](#), for guidance on whether the travel is local or TDY to determine travel entitlements.

- C. When an employee normally uses a mass transportation system for his or her daily commute, only the cost incurred for local travel in excess of the regular daily commuting cost may be claimed as a local travel expense.
- D. When an employee receives a transit subsidy, the calculation of their out-of-pocket travel expense for local travel is based on the actual transportation cost incurred, less the transit subsidy and any additional regular commuting costs. For more information on this program, reference [VA Financial Policy Volume III Chapter 1, Transit Benefit and Bicycle Benefit Program](#).



### 070502 Defining a Local Area

- A. VA Field Facility Directors and the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary (ADAS) for Financial Policy in VA's Central Office (VACO) will establish the local area for their respective official station.
- B. The local area for a station may be defined using either a mileage radius **or** geographic boundaries associated to the station's physical location. Neither the defined local radius, nor the geographic boundaries can exceed 50 miles from the physical location of the official station ([FTR §300-3.1](#), reference Official Station), but can be established less than 50 miles.

Established mileage radii must be uniform for overtime in accordance with [29 U.S.C. § 201, Fair Labor Standards Act](#), and travel allowance purposes in accordance with [5 C.F.R. § 550.112, Computation of Overtime Work](#). More information regarding overtime compensation can be found in [VA Financial Policy Volume XV Chapter 6, Payroll Payments](#).

- C. For VACO employees, the defined local area is travel within 50 miles of the employee's official duty stations physical location.
- D. All VA employee travel within a 50 mile radius of an employee's residence is considered local travel (reference [FTR § 301-7.5\(a\)](#), and [Section 0703, Employee Residence](#)).
- E. VA will use both the official duty station defined local area and the employee's residence to determine if travel is considered to be local or TDY.
- F. Travel to a temporary alternate duty site is local travel if either one of the following conditions applies:
- If the travel is within the employee's official duty station defined local area; or
  - If the travel is within a 50-mile radius of an employee's residence.

If neither of the above conditions are met then the travel would be considered TDY, requiring a travel authorization in VA's travel system (reference [Appendix B, Local Travel Examples](#) for specific examples of local travel).

### 070503 Approval of Local Travel Expenses

- A. The VA Secretary Memorandum, "Essential Employee Travel", issued June 29, 2017, does not apply to local travel (reference [VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 1, Travel Administration](#)).

- B. VA Supervisors, or a position delegated this authority, will approve local travel expenses by written or electronic authorization (i.e., memorandum or email) in advance of an employee incurring local expenses ([FTR §301-2.1](#)). Approval of employee travel after the fact, shall only be done when it is not practicable or possible to obtain such authorization prior to the commencement of travel. However, the following local travel expenses must be authorized in advance ([FTR §301-2.5](#)):
- Use of reduced fares for group or charter arrangements;
  - Acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source for travel expenses; and
  - Travel expenses related to attendance at a conference.
- C. The employee will attach the approval document to the local travel claim in VA's travel system prior to submitting it for approval. A travel authorization in VA's travel system is generally not issued for local travel expenses, but is mandatory when use of VA's travel system is required ([FTR §301-50.3](#)) to make a reservation (e.g., approved rental car) for local travel.
- D. A VA Approving Official may authorize the reimbursement of transportation expenses in excess of their normal daily commute when employees perform official travel at a temporary alternate duty site within their local travel area ([Section 070502](#)), between:
- Office/point of duty and other place of business;
  - One place of business and another place of business; or
  - Residence and place of business other than the office or point of duty.
- E. When employees are officially authorized to work overtime outside of their regular working hours (e.g. weekend), or are called back to work to perform involuntary unscheduled overtime, the Approving Official who approved the overtime work may authorize the reimbursement of expenses in excess of the normal commuting expense (reference [Appendix B, Local Travel Examples](#), Example 6a and 6b).

#### **070504 Authorized Local Travel Expenses**

- A. VA Supervisors (or a position delegated this authority) will authorize the mode of local travel most advantageous to the Government ([FTR §301-10.4](#)). Travelers will adhere to the following hierarchy when determining the mode of local travel necessary to meet mission requirements:
1. VA will approve the use of Non-Motorized Bicycles if requested by the employee. VA employees must complete a bicycle safety training course in the state or district from which he/she commutes. Both the rider and bicycle shall be subject to the laws and regulations applicable to their local travel area. Each bicycle and rider shall be equipped with safety equipment as required.

Reimbursement for bicycle use will be at the prorated daily rate based on established amounts in [VA Handbook 0634, Transit Benefit Bicycle Program](#). For more information on the Bicycle Benefit program, reference [VA Financial Policy Volume III Chapter 1, Transit Benefit and Bicycle Benefit Program](#).

2. VA will approve local public transportation when available. A local travel claim is the reimbursement method for mass transportation, tokens, and metro cards for local travel. Employees may be reimbursed for expenses that exceed their normal commuting cost.
3. VA will use a Government-furnished automobile for local travel when available and is determined to be the most efficient mode of transportation based on mission requirements.

VA employees must hold a valid motor vehicle operator's license to operate a Government-furnished automobile.

An employee may be authorized to drive or be a passenger in a Government-furnished automobile but may opt to use their own POV with a reduced mileage reimbursement. See applicable reimbursement rate on the [GSA Mileage Rate](#) website.

Parking, toll, and other expenses will not be paid using the Fleet card assigned to the Government-furnished automobile. A traveler may be reimbursed the cost of parking, toll and other costs incurred, for which payment arrangements (i.e. E-Z Pass) are not provided by their program office.

4. A POV may be authorized in lieu of an available Government-furnished automobile, when it results in more efficient use of the employee's normal work hours, and the employee is willing to use their POV. VA will reimburse employees for privately-owned vehicle (POV) travel to the extent allowable costs exceed the employee's normal commuting expenses between his or her residence and their official duty station.

Mileage payments and expense reimbursement will only be paid to the employee who owns the POV and incurs the operating expenses, regardless of the number of passengers who accompany the employee or whether passengers contribute funds to defray POV operating expenses.

Employees may not be directed to ride in another employee's POV or to transport other employees in their POV to perform local travel.

5. VA will approve the use of taxis or a transportation network company (TNC) if it is cost advantageous to the government or is required to meet mission requirements.

6. VA will only approve the use of a rental car for local travel if one of the transportation options listed above is not available or does not meet mission requirements. Reference [VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 3, Transportation Expenses](#), for guidance on policies, and procedures related to arranging travel of, and use of rental cars.

When a rental car is authorized for local travel a travel authorization must be created in VA's travel system. If the traveler uses the rental car for commuting, they must deduct the cost of their daily commute from their reimbursement claim. All paid receipts associated with rental cars must be attached or faxed into the travel claim in VA's travel system.

- B. An employee cannot claim reimbursement for local travel expenses unless they are in excess of normal commuting costs. Approving Officials must verify the employee is not being reimbursed excess commuting costs under any transit subsidy or other method before approving the local travel claim.
- C. Government employees are required to follow the laws associated with the selected mode of transportation; VA will not reimburse penalties, fees or costs for traffic, parking or other violations incurred.
- D. Travelers will exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and using personal funds. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays or luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business will not be reimbursed and are not acceptable under this standard. Travelers will be responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience (e.g., taxi or a TNC in lieu of available free shuttle, mass transportation, or Government-furnished automobile, etc.).

#### **070505 Authorizing Lodging and/or Meal Expenses in the Local Area as "Necessary Expenses" of Training**

- A. Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) has the authority to determine which expenses constitute, "the necessary expenses of the training", under the Government Employee Training Act (GETA), ([5 U.S.C. § 4109\(a\)\(2\)\(F\)](#)). SECVA has delegated this authority to the DEPSEC, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and OKOs, with no further re-delegation authorized. Refer to VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Chapter 1, Travel Administration, for the SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".
- B. When exercising this authority Senior Executives must minimize the cost for lodging and/or meals to the Government. Refer to [VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 10, Conference Planning, Oversight, and Reporting](#), for guidance when planning GETA events to avoid requiring the approval of lodging and/or meal(s) actual

expenses incurred in the local area. Procedures for requesting this exception are provided in [Appendix C, Procedures for Requesting Approval for the Necessary Expenses of Training](#).

- C. Unusual work-days (i.e., extended hours) alone are not sufficient for approval for lodging and/or meal expenses. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) long recognized that employees are not entitled to reimbursement of subsistence costs at the official station because of unusual working conditions. GSA Board of Contract Appeals' (GSBCA) decisions are consistent with GAO rulings ([GSBCA 15548-TRAV et al](#)).
- D. Per diem reimbursement is not allowed while in local travel status ([FTR §301-11.1](#)). Instead the actual cost of lodging and/or meals (not per diem) may be authorized as a necessary expense for employees attending or supporting a GETA training event. To obtain approval for the actual cost of lodging and/or meals the following conditions/justifications must apply and be included in an approval memorandum specific to the training event:

The event must be classified as a bona-fide training event as specified in [5 U.S.C. § 4101 \(4\) Definition of Training](#), and [5 U.S.C. § 410.404, Determining if a conference is a training activity](#). The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration must concur on the determination.

- 1. Office of General Counsel (OGC) has opined that appropriated funds may be used to finance overnight lodging and meals for VA employees at their duty stations where the SECVA or his delegate determines such expenses are necessary expenses incident to an authorized training program under [5 U.S.C. § 4109](#). The event organizers should consult with OGC for legal guidance if needed.

Lodging may only be authorized in the local area for training participants and/or support personnel if they are required by VA to stay in the same local hotel to foster participation in daytime and evening activities to achieve the specific mission requirements and objectives of the training.

- 2. Local employees who are required to provide support at a GETA training event may be authorized lodging only when lodging is essential to the training due to the specific mission requirements necessary in support of the training.
- 3. Approval of lodging for attendees and/or support personnel does not automatically provide approval for meals. An event specific justification must be provided for each type of expense.
- 4. Meals may be authorized for attendees and support personnel in the local area when a written justification, citing event specific requirements, substantiates the partaking of meals is necessary to achieve the objectives of the training; such as

a guest speaker or the objectives of the training (workshop) are part of the scheduled agenda to be delivered at the same time that a meal is provided.

- E. For VA sponsored or co-sponsored training events with attendees or support personnel from different administrations, the VA organization hosting the training will approve which local attendees and required support personnel expenses will be reimbursed for the training under GETA.
- F. Advance approval documentation and reimbursement instructions must be provided to the local attendees, and support personnel as applicable, when a determination has been made the cost(s) for lodging and/or meals are reimbursable.
- G. When the cost of lodging and/or meals has been authorized, employees may claim reimbursement of the cost incurred, not to exceed the negotiated or stated amount on the approval letter; and must attach to their local travel claim a copy of the signed approval memorandum.
- H. Meal expenses include breakfast, lunch, dinner and related tips and taxes (specifically excluded are alcoholic beverage and entertainment expenses, and any expenses incurred for other persons).
- I. Employees will be aware of ethical guidelines on the acceptance of unsolicited gifts when various vendors provide free gifts or give-away items at training conferences. Reference [5 C.F.R. Part 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#), for further explanation.

#### **070506 Authorization of Occasional Meals in the Local Area at Conferences or Non-VA Meetings**

- A. As a general rule, VA may not pay per diem (i.e., lodging, meals, and incidental expenses) within the defined local area of their official station ([FTR § 301-7.5\(a\)](#)).
- B. Organizers holding VA meetings in the local area of the official station must schedule time for attendees to obtain their meal(s) at no expense to the government.
- C. However, in accordance with Comptroller General decisions interpreting [5 U.S.C. § 4110, Expenses of Attendance at Meetings](#), VA may reimburse employees the cost of a meal(s) consumed in the defined local area of an official station under specific circumstances.

An Approving Official may authorize the use of appropriated funds for the expense of a meal(s), regardless of whether a conference or non-VA scheduled meeting takes place within the employee's duty station area, under the following circumstances:

1. When a single registration fee is charged covering both attendance and meals, and no separate charge is made for meals, the VA may pay the full registration fee using a Government Purchase Card when the conference or non-VA meeting is related to agency functions or management, under the legal authority of [5 U.S.C. § 4110](#); or
2. When a separate charge is made for meals, the VA may pay for the cost of the meal(s) (not M&IE) on a local travel claim, under the legal authority of [5 U.S.C. § 4110](#), only if there is documentation or an administrative determination all three of the following conditions exist:
  - The meal(s) are incidental to the conference or meeting;
  - Attendance of the employee at the meal(s) is necessary for full participation in the business of the conference or meeting; and
  - The employee is not free to take the meal(s) elsewhere without being absent from essential formal discussions, lectures, or speeches concerning the purpose of the conference or meeting.

Absent the supporting documentation in VA's travel system to substantiate the exceptions listed in 1 or 2, above, VA may not reimburse the employee for the cost of the meal(s).

Reference, Comptroller General's decisions, [Letter to Walter W. Pleines, Social Security Administration, B-233807, Aug. 27, 1990](#); [Decision of the Comptroller General, B-166560, May 27, 1969](#), and [Decision of the Comptroller General, B-154912, Aug. 26, 1964](#), comments on authorizing reimbursement for luncheon fees, for further guidance.

- D. When an employee is on local travel and authorized reimbursement of meal costs under this section, the employee must claim the local meal(s) expense on a local travel claim using VA's travel system. The employee will identify the conference/meeting attended, who sponsored the conference/meeting, and include documentation for incurring the cost. The documentation should include:
  - The employees written or electronic advance authorization from their Supervisor with justification for incurring the cost; and
  - Itemization of the cost and type of meal consumed (lunch, dinner, etc.).
- E. Meal expenses include breakfast, lunch, dinner and related tips and taxes (specifically excluded are alcoholic beverage and entertainment expenses, and any expenses incurred for other persons).

#### **070507 Local Travel Use of Government Travel Card**

- A. Employees will use the Individually-Billed Account (IBA) travel card to pay for approved transportation expenses within the local commuting area when the

- employee has been given written or electronic authorization (i.e., memorandum or email).
- B. Authorized use of an IBA travel card for local travel includes taxis, tolls, local transit, parking, rental car, and gas purchases for rental cars only. Government-furnished automobiles require use of the vehicle's assigned Fleet card to purchase gasoline.
  - C. Unauthorized use of an IBA Travel Card for local travel includes ATM cash withdrawals, gas purchases for Government-furnished automobiles or POV. In addition, the unauthorized uses cited in [VA Financial Policy Volume XVI Chapter 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#), are not allowed.
  - D. The purchase of authorized lodging and/or meals using an IBA travel card is only allowed in the local area under the specific circumstances identified in Sections [070505](#) and [070506](#).
  - E. VA's travel system, for local travel claims, does not support the split disbursement feature to remit payment to the contracted bank on behalf of the cardholder. Cardholders are required to pay all charges for local travel expenses directly to US Bank by the statement due date.

#### **070508 Reimbursement of Local Travel Expenses**

- A. VA's travel system must be used to process all local travel claims.
- B. Employees will submit claims for reimbursement when expenses total greater than \$25 into the travel system at least monthly. When total reimbursement is \$25 or less, claims may be submitted quarterly. However, all claims are required to be submitted in the fiscal year in which the expenses were incurred.
- C. VA approving officials will review, and approve or reject, local travel claims within three business days from the date submitted by the employee. Should the approving official reject a claim, the employee has five (5) business days to correct and resubmit the claim.
- D. When a local travel claim has been created but not approved, the FSC will notify the traveler and approving officials of potential cancellations at 15-day intervals from the ending travel date of the local travel claim.
- E. The FSC will cancel claims not approved within 45-days of the ending date of the local travel and notify the traveler and approving officials of the cancellation.
- F. Processing of local travel claims after the 45-day window passes will require the approval of the traveler's respective Deputy Under Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official.



- G. The Financial Service Center will work with the traveler to ensure local travel claims are charged against the fiscal year in which the expenses were incurred.
- H. VA requires a receipt for lodging, and each individual expense greater than \$75.

If a receipt cannot be located, VA employees will provide a written statement in lieu of a valid receipt. This statement will describe the circumstances, explaining why a receipt cannot be provided, and contain all of the information that would be included in a valid receipt, such as the service provider's name and address, date(s) of service, itemized expenses and total amount paid.

- I. VA employees will attach (fax or scan) all required receipts, documents, or justifications, and the written or electronic authorization to the local travel claim in VA's travel system before submitting it for approval.
- J. Travelers must attach documentation of the miles traveled to the travel claim. An online distance calculation tool such as, Google maps, Mapquest.com®, or other applications are considered acceptable evidence of the distance that had to be traveled. Approving officials are required to verify the claimed mileage.

Should a difference of more than five (5) percent exist between the requested reimbursable mileage and the approving official calculated mileage (rounded up to the nearest mile), the employee must provide and attach to the travel voucher a justification the authorizing official can use to verify the validity of the reimbursement request.

- K. When the cost of lodging and/or meals has been authorized as a “necessary expense of training” under GETA, employees may be reimbursed the cost incurred, not to exceed the negotiated or stated amount included in the approval document. The employee must attach to their local travel claim a copy of the signed approval memorandum, the lodging receipt, and/or a meal receipt if in excess of \$75.
- L. Local expense reimbursement payments will be made via electronic fund transfer (EFT). Under normal conditions, properly prepared and filed local travel claims, or travel claims when applicable, will be paid within 30-days of receipt.

## **0706 Authorities and References**

[5 U.S.C. § 410.404, Determining if a Conference is a Training Activity](#)

[5 U.S.C. § 4101 Definition of Training](#)

[5 U.S.C. § 4109, Government Employee Training Act](#)

[5 U.S.C. § 4110 Expenses of Attendance at Meetings](#)

[5 C.F.R. § 550.112, Computation of Overtime Work](#)

[5 C.F.R. Part 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#)

[29 U.S.C. § 201, Fair Labor Standards Act](#)

Civilian Board of Contract Appeals Decisions [15655-TRAV](#) and [16069-TRAV](#)

[Decision of the Comptroller General, B-154912, Aug. 26, 1964](#)

[Decision of the Comptroller General, B-166560, May 27, 1969](#)

[Decision of the Comptroller General, B-181347, Mar. 2, 1977 \(Overtime--Travel Time\)](#)

[Executive Order 13150, Federal Workforce Transportation](#)

[FTR Chapters 300-304](#)

[General Services Board of Contract Appeals 15548-TRAV et al](#)

[GSA Mileage Rates](#)

[GSA State Tax Information](#)

[Letter to Walter W. Pleines, Social Security Administration, B-233807, Aug. 27, 1990](#)

[To Steve F. Heller, United States Department of Agriculture, B-175608, Jan. 22, 1973](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume III Chapter 1, Transit Benefit and Bicycle Benefit Program](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XV Chapter 6, Payroll Payments](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 1, Travel Administration](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 3, Transportation Expenses](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XVI Chapter 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#)

[VA Handbook 0634, Transit Benefit Bicycle Program](#)

[VA Handbook 5011/5, Hours of Duty and Leave](#)

**0707 Rescissions**

VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 7, Local Travel, June 2018.

**0708 Questions**

Questions concerning these financial policies and procedures should be directed to:

VHA

[VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov](mailto:VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov)

VBA

[TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov)

NCA

[NCABudgetService@va.gov](mailto:NCABudgetService@va.gov)

OIT

[VACOITTravel@va.gov](mailto:VACOITTravel@va.gov)

All Others

[VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov](mailto:VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov)

**Appendix A: Revision History**

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
0701	Revised FTR supersedes Union agreements statement.	APS (047G)	August 2017
070202	Added local travel not subject to SECVA June 29, 2017 memo, “Essential Employee Travel”. Identified two conditions when the cost (not per diem) of lodging and/or meals can be authorized in the local area; Government Employee Training Act (GETA), and occasional meals, moved and updated from Vol XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem. Under GETA added support personnel.	APS (047G)	August 2017
0703	Added law references for reimbursing the cost of lodging and/or meals for two conditions in the local area.	APS (047G)	August 2017
0704	Added responsibilities and guidance for Senior Executive positions delegated approval of local lodging and meal expenses under GETA.	APS (047G)	August 2017
070502	Added paragraphs C and D, providing authority and approval request actions required for each condition referenced above in Section 070202, when the cost of lodging and/or meals (not per diem) can be reimbursed to VA employees. Under paragraph C, added condition for support personnel expenses, and OGC concurrence on use of appropriated funds. Updated delegation of authority for approval of lodging and/or meals under GETA, based on SECVA June 16, 2017 delegation. Removed requirement for a travel authorization for authorized GETA local travel, updating to submit all local travel claims in VA’s travel system with signed GETA approval memorandum.	APS (047G)	August 2017
0706	Added definition of Necessary Expenses to clarify GETA requirements, with links to the definition in applicable sections.	APS (047G)	August 2017
Various	Changed local expense voucher to local travel claim, a non-system-specific term.	APS (047G)	August 2017

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
Appendix D	Replaced Per Diem in title with the Necessary Expenses of Training, and updated procedures to clarify approval request justification requirements.	APS (047G)	August 2017
Appendix E	Removed, all local travel claims are required to be submitted in VA's travel system.	APS (047G)	August 2017
0701 Overview	Added paragraph relating to Union master agreements	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
070201 Authority for Local Travel	Clarified local travel to apply to both official station local radius and employee's residence local radius.	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
070202 Actions for Local Travel	Updated Vol III, Ch. 1, Transit Benefit and Bicycle Benefit Program title. Added employee responsibility for paying approved charges on IBA travel card.	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
0704 Roles and Responsibilities	Removed Office of Financial Business Operations; replaced with Office of Financial Policy due to transition of Travel Policy Services.	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
070501 Approval for Local Travel	Included provision for post-travel approval.	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
070502 Actions for Local Travel	Added information on 6. Bicycles. Clarified 7. Approved Exceptions to Local Travel Per Diem. Removed parking receipt requirement of \$25 to fall under \$75 threshold. Updated approving officials review to 3 days to remain consistent for all local travel claims.	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
0706 Definitions	Added Approving Official, Authorization, Bicycle, GOV. Separated Telework and Virtual to provide clarity.	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
Appendix D	Added Procedures for Requesting Per Diem Approval in the Local Area	APPS (047GA)	January 2013
Appendix E	Added copy of SF1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business.	APPS (047GA)	January 2013

## Appendix B: Local Travel Examples

### A. Example 1.

Situation: Lisa is stationed at the VA office in Cleveland. Her daily commute by POV is 30 miles round trip. Her boss wants her to go to a conference at a hotel in the local commuting area. The distance from Lisa's home to the hotel is 50 miles round trip.

VA Reimbursement: Lisa would be reimbursed 20 miles net mileage over her normal daily commute.

Round trip from home to conference:	50 miles
Less round trip from home to work:	<u>- 30 miles</u>
Net mileage reimbursement:	20 miles x mileage rate

### B. Example 2.

Situation: Jill is stationed at the VA Medical Center in Kansas City. Her home is 20 miles from work. Jill's boss wants her to attend a meeting at another agency in the afternoon (7 miles from work). Jill returns home from the meeting location (10 miles to home).

VA Reimbursement: Jill **is not** authorized for local mileage reimbursement, since the distance traveled is less than the ordinary round trip commuting distance to work.

Home to work:	20 miles
Work to meeting:	7 miles
Meeting to home:	<u>10 miles</u>
Total mileage for day:	37 miles
Round trip from home to work:	40 miles

### C. Example 3.

Situation: Gary is stationed at VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. He pays \$10 a day out of pocket for Metro services. Gary's boss wants him to attend a conference in Crystal City (30 miles from Gary's home). Gary drives his car.

VA Reimbursement: Gary would be reimbursed 60 miles round trip minus \$10 a day out of pocket Metro costs. When an employee receives a transit subsidy, the calculation of their out-of-pocket travel expense for local travel is based on the actual transportation cost incurred less the cost the traveler would have incurred without a transit subsidy.

Home to conference: 30 miles  
Conference to home: 30 miles

Total mileage for day: 60 miles x mileage rate - \$10 Metro cost

D. Example 4a (Teleworker).

Situation: Sarah is a teleworker. She works from her mobile office (home) on Monday and Friday and reports to her official duty station on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Her home is 30 miles from the official duty station. Her boss wants Sarah to attend training on Monday and Tuesday. The training site is 20 miles from Sarah's home.

VA Reimbursement: The normal commute mileage would not be determined from her mobile office on her telework days Monday and Friday. The regular commute to the official station is always deducted.

Monday

Round trip home to training: 40 miles  
Less round trip home to work: - 60 miles

Total mileage for the day: - 20 miles (there is no reimbursement)

Tuesday

Round trip home to training: 40 miles  
Less round trip home to work: - 60 miles

Total mileage for the day: - 20 miles (there is no reimbursement)

E. Example 4b (Teleworker).

Situation: John is a teleworker. He works from his mobile office (other than home) on Thursday and Friday and reports to his official duty station on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. His home is 10 miles from his mobile office and 43 miles from the official duty station. His boss wants John to attend a conference on Wednesday and Thursday. The conference is 25 miles from John's home.

VA Reimbursement: The normal commute mileage would not be determined from his mobile office on his telework days Thursday and Friday. The regular commute to the official station is always deducted.

Wednesday:

Round trip home to conference: 50 miles

Less round trip home to work: - 86 miles  
Total mileage for the day: - 36 miles (there is no reimbursement)

Thursday:

Round trip home to conference: 50 miles  
Less round trip home to work: - 86 miles  
Total mileage for the day: - 36 miles (there is no reimbursement)

F. Example 5a (Virtual Employee).

Situation: Charles is a virtual employee. He works from his virtual office (home) on a full time basis in Montgomery, Alabama. He is assigned to VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. His boss wants John to attend training on Monday. The training site is 20 miles from John's home.

VA Reimbursement: There is no deduction for a daily commute since his virtual office (home) is his official duty station of record.

Home to training: 20 miles  
Training to home: 20 miles  
Total mileage for the day: 40 miles x mileage reimbursement

G. Example 5b (Virtual Employee).

Situation: Pete is a virtual employee. He works from his virtual office (Memphis VA Medical Center) on a full time basis. He is assigned to VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. His home is 15 miles from his virtual office. His boss wants Pete to attend a conference on Wednesday. The conference is 25 miles from Pete's home.

VA Reimbursement: The normal commute mileage would be calculated from his home to his virtual office (Memphis VA Medical Center), his official duty station of record.

Round trip home to conference: 50 miles  
Less round trip home to work  
(virtual office): - 30 miles  
Total mileage for the day: 20 miles x mileage reimbursement



H. Example 6a (Weekend/Non-Workday Employee).

Situation: John is called into the office on Saturday (non-workday) by his supervisor. The office parking lot cost is \$12 per day and John needs to park in the public parking lot incurring a cost of \$20.

VA Reimbursement: Parking \$20 - \$12 = \$8; reimbursed as cost in excess of daily commute.

Round trip home to office:	30 miles
Less daily commute	<u>- 30 miles</u>
Total mileage for the day	0 miles (No reimbursement for commute)

I. Example 6b (Weekend/Non-Workday Employee).

Situation: Susan is called into the office on Sunday (non-workday) by her supervisor. Susan's only means of transportation into work is the public bus; she does not own a car. The bus that services her home does not run on Sundays. Susan took a taxi into the office on Sunday.

VA Reimbursement:

Cost of Taxi on Sunday:	\$18.00 (round trip)
Workday roundtrip cost of bus:	<u>- 6.00 (round trip)</u>
Reimbursement:	\$12.00

## Appendix C: Procedures for Requesting Approval for the Necessary Expenses of Training

The instructions below are for submitting for approval of the necessary expenses for local area employees or support personnel who are required to attend a GETA event (reference [Section 070505](#) for approval guidance).

In preparing a request for approval, all justifications must cite specific activities of the training event to substantiate the expenses requested for the training are necessary expenses. Simply citing policy to support the request is unacceptable and will not be authorized by the delegated Senior Executive.

Once concurrence is obtained from the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration the event is classified as a bona-fide GETA training, the requesting office will forward the approval memorandum to their respective Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official for signature. Once approved the requesting office must provide a copy of the signed approval to all authorized local travelers.

When approval is obtained, the employees specified will be reimbursed for the authorized lodging and/or meal expenses on a local travel claim. The approval memorandum must be attached to the travel claim when submitted. Receipts are required for lodging, and for a meal if in excess of \$75.

**Request for Approval.** The requesting office must prepare a memorandum including the following information in the paragraph number indicated:

1. **Training Information.** The number of attendees from the local area, and a separate number identifying any local support personnel, for whom lodging and/or meal(s) are being requested; the costs for lodging and for meals per attendee and support personnel, and the overall total cost for attendees, and total cost for support personnel, the name of the training event, the dates of the event, and a brief description of event.
2. **Justification for Lodging and Meals.** The agenda or event specific information justifying attendees and support personnel to incur lodging and/or meals (reference [Section 070505](#) for guidance).
3. **Defined Local Travel Area.** The defined local travel area of the participant(s) official station and the location of the training as being within the local area.
4. Nothing to insert, paragraph reads as required.
5. **Delegation Authority.** Identify the current delegation of authority.
6. **Requirements for Authorization.** The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration has concurred the event has been classified as a bona-fide GETA Training

Event; and meals and lodging have been determined to be necessary expenses for the training by the approving official.

7. **Contact Information.** The requesting organization’s point of contact information.

**\*\* SAMPLE \*\***

Department of  
Veterans Affairs

**Memorandum**

Date:

From: (Title of Requesting Official)

Subj: Approval of the Necessary Expenses of Training for Locally Based Employees (VA document processing system # if applicable)

To: (Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official)

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to request your approval for lodging and meal (*specify which expense lodging, meals, or lodging and meals*) expenses for (*enter # of attendees and # of support personnel*) at the upcoming training event (*name of training*). The dates requested for lodging and/or meals are (*include dates*). (*Provide brief description of the training*).
2. The attendees (*and support personnel if applicable*) will participate in (*indicate the event specific justification which would require attendance and necessitate the lodging, and separately for meals under [Section 070505](#)*). (*Update the following sample table to reflect cost information for approval per procedure 1. Training Information*).

Locality Per Diem Rates		Daily Lodging Cost Per Person	Daily Meal Cost Per Person	Number of days	Total Cost	Cost Per Person
Lodging/Meal Rate- \$250/\$64						
Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner- \$16/\$17/\$31						
Local Number of Attendees	57	\$201.00	\$17.00	2	\$24,852.00	\$436.00
Local Number of Support Staff	10	\$0.00	\$17.00	2	\$340.00	\$34.00

3. The defined local travel area for the official station is (insert). The location of the training is (indicate location) which falls within the defined local area.
4. Employees are not entitled to per diem while in a local travel status. In accordance with VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Travel, Chapter 7, Local Travel, Section 070505, as an exception, VA may authorize the cost of lodging and/or meals as a “necessary expense of training” in the local area if an employee is attending or supporting a Government Employees Training Act (GETA) event (5 U.S.C. 41). The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration must determine if the event qualifies as a training event under GETA, based on the guidelines in [5 U.S.C. § 4101](#) and [§ 410.404](#).
5. In accordance with Secretary of Veterans Affairs Memorandum, “Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences”, the authorization to make this determination is delegated to the Deputy Secretary, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials, with no further re-delegation authorized.
6. The following requirements have been met for authorizing reimbursement of lodging and/or meals in the local area:
  - a. The event has been classified as a bona-fide training event and concurred on by the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration.
  - b. I have made the determination all (attendees and support personnel as applicable) are required to partake of meals and the associated cost is necessary to achieve the objectives of the training.
  - c. I have made the determination all (attendees and support personnel as applicable) are required to stay in the same local hotel is necessary to achieve the objectives of the training.
7. Should you have any additional questions or need additional information please contact (provide name, title, and contact information).

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(Executive or Event POC)

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Date

Recommend: Approve / Disapprove

(Name)  
Assistant Secretary  
for Human Resources and Administration

Date

Approve / Disapprove

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Title of Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary,  
Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date