



Travel & Training Policy

Adopted April 25, 2022

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Introduction

The County recognizes that the employees are its most valuable resource and therefore provides opportunities for employee growth and development. At times, this range of opportunity may be seminars, professional organization's meetings, continuing education, etc. The County has developed policies and regulations that dictate official travel expenses, educational costs, employee reimbursements, and other such items.

Expenses reimbursed by the County include those preapproved by your Elected Official/Department Head as reasonable and necessary to properly conduct County business.

Employees request reimbursement by filing an "Otero County Expense Account Sheet" form. Receipts supporting expenses for lodging, commercial transportation, auto rental, toll charges (if available), etc., must be submitted with the report. Employees will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages. Travel and Expense Reports for reimbursement should be turned in within 60 days from the time the expense is incurred. Requests submitted after that time may be denied.

Air Travel

If the employee travels by air, the County will only pay the most economical fare. If for some reason this type of fare is not feasible, the appropriate Elected Official/Department Head or Board of County Commissioners may authorize a more expensive fare. In no instances will first class airfare be paid.

Rail Travel

If an employee chooses to travel by rail when travel by vehicle or air is possible, the form of travel that is the most economical will be paid and therefore the lesser amount will be reimbursed. The additional lodging and per diem expenses will not be paid when the employee chooses to travel by rail. Only the most direct and economical travel route will be reimbursed.

Car Rental

Car rentals require approval by the appropriate Elected Official/Department Head. Should circumstances necessitate a car rental while on County business, the following provisions apply:

- a. The car shall be rented in the County employee's name.
- b. Type of car: Most appropriate for the situation.
- c. Driver(s) of car: Only Otero County Employee(s) whose name appears on the rental car contract shall drive the vehicle. Under no circumstances shall a non-Otero County employee drive the rental car.
- d. Insurance coverage: Provided from Colorado Technical Services, Inc. (CTSI). The authorized employee shall contact the Commissioner's Office to obtain an insurance card to carry in the rental vehicle. No supplemental insurance is required.

Taxi/Ride Share/Bus Fare

Reasonable expenses are permitted for this category, if applicable. Receipts are required.

Parking and Road Tolls

Reasonable expenses are permitted for this category, if applicable. Receipts are required.

County Vehicles

County vehicles may be provided to certain departments to facilitate the workload. Those individuals utilizing these vehicles will be required to have proper maintenance on the vehicle provided by the Otero County Road and Bridge Shop. Failure to do so shall result in disciplinary action and may result in the forfeiture of the use of that vehicle. Please note that these vehicles are to be utilized for County business only. Rising costs for insurance, vehicle maintenance, etc., have forced the County to continually evaluate its ability to provide business vehicles, and the provision of such transportation will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Employees operating a County vehicle must have a valid Driver's License. The type of license (Commercial Driver's License or other category) must be appropriate for the type of vehicle operated. It is the employee's responsibility to report to the Human Resources Office any changes in the status of said employee's Driver's License. Violations that an employee receives because of the operation of the vehicle are the responsibility of the employee.

Violations that an employee receives because of the operation of the vehicle will be reviewed and disciplinary action may be taken upon completion of the review. Seat belt use is mandatory in all County vehicles.

At times, employees need to transport non-County persons in a County vehicle. The employee must request permission for non-County employees to be allowed to ride in a County vehicle with a specified time frame. The request will be considered by the Board of County Commissioners or their designee on a case-by-case basis. All passengers must comply with the use of safety restraint devices. The Board of County Commissioners may delegate permission-granting ability to Elected Officials/Department Heads to allow non-County employees to ride in County vehicles for a specified amount of time.

Non-County Vehicles

Employees who utilize personal vehicles in the course of their job duties shall have a valid Driver's License, shall maintain insurance on the vehicle, and shall meet any other requirements as outlined in the Colorado Revised Statutes including but not limited to seatbelt use. The type of license (Commercial Driver's License or regular operator) must be appropriate for the type of vehicle operated. Any violations that an employee receives because of the operation of the vehicle are the responsibility of the employee.

Employees authorized to travel by personal car for business purposes are reimbursed at the County's current mileage rate. The rate is set by the Board of County Commissioners and is periodically reviewed as deemed necessary. If a County vehicle is available, the employee must take this option first with the personal vehicle as a second option. Prior approval of mileage reimbursement can be given by the Elected Official/Department Head on a case-by-case basis to reimburse mileage under special circumstances if a personal car is used.

If an employee chooses to drive a personal vehicle when travel by air is possible at a lesser expense, only the lesser amount will be reimbursed. The additional lodging and per diem expenses incurred will not be paid when the employee chooses to drive rather than fly, unless the total cost including mileage is less than the lowest unrestricted airfare available. Only the most direct travel route will be reimbursed. Any damage and liability resulting from the use of a private vehicle shall be the responsibility of the employee.

Mileage Rate

Effective April 25, 2022, the mileage shall be \$.53 per mile.

Meals

The cost for meals will not be reimbursed for unauthorized meetings. Employees attending conferences/training shall not be reimbursed for a per diem meal if that meal is included in the cost of the conference/training registration. Dietary restrictions will be considered and can be approved for reimbursement by the Elected Official/Department Head. Local meals will not be reimbursed unless approved by the Elected Official/Department Head. Tips are not paid separately and are included in the per diem rate. All Elected Officials/Department Heads shall ensure compliance with this policy within their departments and shall ensure that all reimbursed travel expenses are conducted for the benefit of the County and are undertaken in an economical and reasonable manner.

Reimbursement or Advance Payment for Meals

The cost for meals will be reimbursed at actual cost for reimbursable (allowable) meals but shall not exceed the County's current per diem meal allowance. Detailed itemized receipts are required for reimbursement. Employees shall use the "Otero County Expense Account Sheet" form or other form approved by the County Commissioners to document reimbursement of expenses and attach all receipts.

Upon authorization, a request for advance payment of per diem for meals must be submitted at least fifteen (15) days in advance of the travel date to ensure timely handling of the request. Failure to allow fifteen (15) days' notice may result in delayed processing of the payment. Employees shall use the "Otero County Expense Account Sheet" form or other form approved by the County Commissioners to request advance payment.

The IRS requires adequate records for all employee reimbursement of travel expenses, allowances, and advancements, including transactions made with County credit cards that are considered day trips.

Key requirements for reimbursement for meals are eligible for reimbursement as follows:

- a. Departs the work site or home before 6:00 a.m., breakfast is allowed
- b. Lunch for a single day of travel/training is eligible for reimbursement if not provided
- c. Arrives home after 8:00 p.m., dinner is allowed
- d. Meals that are not provided at the training/conference. Dietary restrictions will be considered and can be approved for reimbursement by the Elected Official/Department Head

Because of traffic and other hindrances, 15 minutes of travel time will be added to each hour of estimated time to the destination. (Example: You are required to be in Denver for a 9:30

meeting. The estimated travel time is 3 hours. You would be allowed an extra 45-minute travel time. To get to your meeting by 9:30 and allowing 3 hours and 45 minutes travel, you would need to leave at 5:45 a.m. You would be able to claim breakfast reimbursement.) The same will work for the return trip.

Alcohol shall not be reimbursed at any time, even if it's recorded on a receipt.

The request should include a copy of the conference brochure, agenda, or other such appropriate information.

Per Diem Rates

Effective April 25, 2022, the per diem rates shall be:

Breakfast	\$15.00
Lunch	\$20.00
<u>Dinner</u>	<u>\$30.00</u>
Total	\$65.00

The per diem rates shall be limited to a total of \$65.00 per day. The Elected Official/Department Head may require documentation of expenses.

Lodging

Employees must obtain a receipt for hotel and motel lodging expenses and charges must be justifiable. For example, movie charges are not an allowable expense. The County will reimburse only single room rates unless a room is shared by two or more County employees or in conference situations if the cost for a different type of room is the same as the single rate. When possible, accommodations shall be the government rate or comparable.

Normally, a County payment shall be issued to the appropriate vendor, for example, the hotel/motel, and a copy of the County's tax exemption certificate should be provided. Employees should make the effort to follow this procedure to prevent charges for sales tax being added to the lodging bill.

Reimbursement of lodging expenses will not be made for any non-County personnel traveling with the County employee if it is more than the single rate as outlined above. Employees shall use the "Otero County Expense Account Sheet" form or other form approved by the County Commissioners to document reimbursement of expenses and attach all receipts.

Approval Requirements

All requests for travel must be approved by the appropriate Elected Official/Department Head. The request should include a copy of the conference brochure, agenda, or other such appropriate information. No reimbursement or advance payment shall be allowed if such a request has not been authorized by the appropriate Elected Official/Department Head.

Upon authorization a request for advance payment of per diem, lodging and/or conference registration must be submitted at least fifteen (15) days in advance of the travel date to ensure timely handling of the request. Failure to allow fifteen (15) days' notice may result in delayed processing of the payment.

Emergency situations may occur and will be handled in a manner that is appropriate. The employee may be required to pay for the travel expenses out of pocket and may be reimbursed upon return.

Registration Fees

Fees for approved seminars, conferences, etc., are permitted. Registration fees do not include pre- or post-conference activities nor side events not considered a part of the main business conference.

County Credit Cards

The issuance of a County credit card to designated Elected Officials/Department Heads and other designated employees may be approved by the Board of County Commissioners in order to provide some flexibility in travel.

Training Expenses

Employees could be provided job-related training as determined by the Elected Official/Department Head. All training paid for by the County must be job-related and must benefit the County.

Required Training

Employees may be required to take training as a condition of employment. Generally, the training is paid in full by the department requiring it.

Developmental Training

Developmental training will be used to ensure and improve performance, capabilities, and morale of participating employees. These may range from no cost County training sessions to professional development programs that require registration fees. Attendance at those sessions requiring a registration fee is subject to approval by Elected Official/Department Head. Generally, if approved, the cost of the training is paid in full.

Training Contracts/Agreements

Elected Officials/Department Heads may utilize ‘training contracts/agreements’ to recoup training costs or maintain qualified staff. Such contracts are required to be reviewed and approved by the County Attorney. Failure to comply with the conditions of the training could result in an employee's repayment of the training costs.

Adoption

This Travel and Training Policy was adopted on April 25, 2022, by the following Elected Officials and Department Heads:

- Jim Baldwin, Chairman-Board of County Commissioners
- John Hostetler, Commissioner
- Rob Oquist, Commissioner
- Bob Fowler, Coroner
- Bruce Fickenscher, Southeast Area Director – CSU Extension
- Danelle Berg, Economic Development
- Danny Chavez, Emergency Manager
- Dennis Smith, Treasurer
- Donna Rohde, Director – Department of Human Services
- Lex Nichols, Director – Public Works
- Lyn Scott, Clerk & Recorder
- Rick Ritter, Director – Public Health
- Shawn Mobley, Sheriff
- Lori Burkhalter, Human Resources
- Tina Mascarenas, Finance
- Amy White-Tanabe, Administrator