



# State of Arizona Accounting Manual

Topic 50 Travel

Issued 01/13/20

Section 09 Responsibilities of Travelers and Those  
Making or Reviewing Travel Arrangements

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## INTRODUCTION

There are many who either travel as employees, make travel arrangements for those who travel, review travel arrangements, approve travel arrangements, or travel on behalf of the State who need to follow the State travel policies and procedures. In this section of SAAM, all these individuals will be referred to as “traveler.” In order for State travel to be conducted as fairly, efficiently and economically as possible, it is important for all travelers to understand their responsibilities related to travel. What follows is a list of those responsibilities; this list is non-exhaustive. In the event of a conflict between this list and the instructions, directions or policies enumerated in other applicable sections of SAAM, those other sections prevail. For more detail or clarification on any travel topic, see the applicable travel section.

SAAM 5007, *Agency-level Travel Responsibilities*, includes additional information of value pertaining to agency travel responsibilities and approvals for various roles involved in the travel process.

SAAM 5008, *Travel Matters Requiring the Approval of the State Comptroller*, includes additional information of value pertaining to travel-related approvals.

The term “State Travel Policy” generally means SAAM Topic 50, *Travel*; under certain limited circumstances, it might include a travel-related *All Agency Memorandum*.

## POLICIES

1. Agency management is responsible for requiring travelers, potential travelers, those who make travel arrangements for others, those who review travel arrangements, those who approve travel arrangements, and those who will be reimbursed by the State for travel to review travel policy, and in particular this section of travel policy, prior to making travel arrangements and traveling for the State.
  - 1.1. Travelers include both those employed and those not employed by the State.
  - 1.2. Employees of cities, towns, counties, school districts and other political subdivisions of the State are not employees of the State.
2. The responsibilities of travelers, those who make travel arrangements for travelers, those who review travel arrangements, those who approve travel arrangements, and those who will be reimbursed by the State for travel include, but are not limited to:

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- 2.1. Reviewing State Travel Policy as set forth in SAAM Topic 50 prior to making travel arrangements or traveling.
    - 2.1.1. This review should include, but not necessarily be limited to, those sections of SAAM pertaining to the trip under consideration. For example, if the trip involves air travel, meals, and overnight lodging, reviewing SAAM 5010, *Common Carrier Transportation*, SAAM 5025, *Meals and Incidentals*, SAAM 5030, *Hotels, Motels and Lodging*, and SAAM 5095, *Maximum Mileage, Lodging, Meal, Parking and Incidental Expense Reimbursement Rates*, are of particular importance, though any number of other sections of State Travel Policy might apply.
  - 2.2. Reviewing agency travel policies and procedures prior to making travel arrangements or traveling.
  - 2.3. Obtaining written approval from the agency head or his delegee on a Form GAO-509, *Out-of-State Travel Approval Request* (or an authorized agency equivalent), prior to traveling out-of-state.
  3. Except for mileage or unless otherwise specifically provided in SAAM, to be in travel status and eligible for reimbursement of travel expenditures a traveler must be more than fifty (50) miles from both the traveler's residence and his regular duty post.
  4. Mileage might be reimbursable when not in travel status; however, additional considerations are necessary. See SAAM 5015, *Travel by Individually Operated Motor Vehicle*, for further information.
  5. Travel is conducted and reimbursed in accordance with State Travel Policy, regardless of the funding source that pays for the travel and is limited to the State rates published in SAAM 5095, *Maximum Mileage, Lodging, Meal, Parking and Incidental Expense Reimbursement Rates*.
  6. Reimbursement rates published in SAAM 5095, *Maximum Mileage, Lodging, Meal, Parking and Incidental Expense Reimbursement Rates*, are reimbursement limits, not fixed per diems. A traveler may claim, up to the applicable reimbursement limit, only those amounts actually spent or incurred, whether or not receipts are required.
    - 6.1. When making travel arrangements, travelers should always seek the most economical means of travel, even when reasonable additional time and effort is required. Making travel arrangements as early as possible usually provides travelers the most options and results in the most cost effective travel.
      - 6.1.1. Reimbursements for lodging and meals shall not exceed the lower of the actual amounts incurred or the maximum reimbursement amounts allowable for the type and location of the expense.
      - 6.1.2. For trips with an overnight stay, the maximum daily meal and incidental reimbursement limits are reduced to seventy-five percent (75%) of normal on the

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- day of original departure and the day of return. For more information, see SAAM 5025, *Meals and Incidentals*.
- 6.1.3. For travel not involving an overnight stay, meals may be reimbursed only when the traveler has been in travel status for more than six (6) hours. See SAAM 5025, *Meals and Incidentals* for details and SAAM 5095, *Maximum Mileage, Lodging, Meal, Parking and Incidental Expense Reimbursement Rates*, for the reimbursement limits.
- 6.1.4. Meals provided to the traveler by anyone other than the traveler, regardless whether or not accepted by the traveler, must be deducted from the meal and incidentals maximum reimbursement limit. Provided meals on the day of departure and return are reduced at 100% of the amount allocated for that particular meal.
- Example: The applicable daily limit for meals is \$45.00. The partial day rates by meal are breakfast \$9.00, lunch \$12.00, and dinner \$24.00. On the day of return when the maximum reimbursement limit is reduced to seventy-five percent (75%) of the full-day limit, the hotel provides breakfast. The partial day rate for breakfast is \$9.00. The maximum reimbursement calculation for the return day meals is  $\$45.00 \times 75\% = \$33.75 - \$9.00 = \$24.75$ . The maximum reimbursement limit for lunch and dinner and incidentals for this is day is \$24.75.
- 6.1.5. Many lodging establishments have a variety of fees, taxes, and charges. Some of these charges must be considered as part of the room rate and apply towards the maximum allowable reimbursement limit and some will allow for reimbursement for an amount more than the maximum reimbursement limit. See SAAM 5030, *Hotels, Motels and Lodging*, for further information.
- 6.1.6. Reimbursements for lodging while attending a conference shall not exceed the least expensive single occupancy room rate published in the conference brochure for its designated lodging establishments regardless of whether rooms are still available at that rate.
- 6.1.7. It is expected that travelers conduct research for various commercial lodging options and take advantage of lodging which results in a savings for the State. This includes requesting governmental rates and possibly booking at other nearby hotels, if they have a lower rate than the conference hotel.
- 6.1.8. If lodging cannot be located within the allowable rate, it is expected that multiple travel booking sites should be utilized to determine what lodging is available. Many times, another hotel can be found which might be slightly farther away than desired, but the combination of the lower cost lodging and the cost of transportation is still less expensive than the hotel closer to the destination.
- 6.1.9. Travelers are not to favor certain airlines, hotel chains, or other providers based on frequent purchasing programs. When making travel arrangements, documentation that shows reasonable efforts have been made to arrange the most reasonably economic travel should be obtained and retained.

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- 6.2. When making any travel arrangements that include lodging, travelers are required to obtain and retain confirmations until after the travel reimbursement is complete. This information might be necessary to obtain a billing adjustment for incorrect charges. This confirmation must contain the name and location of the provider, the dates of service or lodging, the rate per night, local transportation, etc., and a description of the service. If a confirmation is received, which does not provide the necessary information or if the confirmation is incorrect, follow up with the provider must occur immediately.
- 6.3. Travelers should know how much their room charge is going to be before traveling. Rates can change nightly; therefore, the rates should be confirmed for all nights of the stay. If the rate is not within the reimbursement limits contained in policy, the expectation is that an alternative that complies with policy will be found. Averaging rates over several days is not acceptable; each day's rate must be considered on its own.
- 6.4. Lodging may be shared. When lodging is shared, the reimbursement per person should not exceed the amount that would have been allowed if the travelers had not shared accommodations, i.e., the single occupancy room rate (subject to the local reimbursement limit) times the number of travelers. See SAAM 5030, *Hotels, Motels, and Lodging*, for further information.
- 6.5. Agency management does not have the authority to approve lodging rates above the State rates or conference lodging above the lowest published single occupancy room rate in the conference brochure. The State Comptroller must approve all travel policy exceptions. An approved GAO-509, *Out-of-State Travel Approval Request*, does not mean the lodging rate is approved if it does not comply with SAAM.
- 6.6. If a travel exception is needed, the Form GAO-515, *Request for Travel Policy Exception Requiring the Approval of the State Comptroller or Designee*, must be completed and signed by the agency head or deputy agency head and Chief Financial Officer and submitted to GAO at least ten (10) business days prior to traveling to allow time for processing. Exception requests that occur after travel usually result in less favorable results. Form GAO-515 travel policy exception requests, whether granted or denied, will be returned to the agency making the request.
- 6.6.1. Lodging exception requests must include a comprehensive list of all options researched and documentation that clearly indicates that the traveler could not obtain a room within the allowable rate and what actions were taken to help reduce the cost to the State. This information will be verified.
- 6.6.2. All supporting documentation related to the travel policy exception request must be attached to the Form GAO-515 to include research conducted, conference brochures, Form GAO-509, quotes, etc.

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7. All travelers are responsible for knowing and following travel policy. Lack of travel policy knowledge is not an acceptable reason for noncompliance. Travel expenses incurred that do not comply with policy are the traveler's responsibility and will not be reimbursed.
    - 7.1. A traveler might be liable for noncompliance even if another person made the travel arrangements. It is the traveler's responsibility to manage the costs associated with his own trip.
  8. Money spent on certain incidentals will result in less money being available for meals. See SAAM 5026, *Incidentals and Other Travel-related Expenses*, for more details.
  9. Although some travel expenses might not require receipts, it is a good practice to get receipts for all travel expenses to assist with completing travel claims and to be able to substantiate all travel expenses. For more information about what receipts are or are not required, please refer to the applicable section of SAAM (e.g., 5010 for common carrier travel, 5030 for meals and lodging, etc.) and the agency's travel policy and procedures should be consulted.
    - 9.1. Except as they relate to mileage, for which other substantiation such as a trip log is required, receipts are needed to support all claims for travel reimbursement from travelers who are not employees of the State (those who travel for the State, but who are not employees of the State include, but might not be limited to, contractors, volunteers, unpaid interns, employees of other governments, etc.).
    - 9.2. Most reimbursements for employees of the State do require receipts. Receipts should provide sufficient detail that allows an agency to properly review and pay any travel claims. See the applicable travel policy section for more information.
  10. Each traveler is responsible for the timely and accurate submission of his travel claims.
    - 10.1. For travel claims other than those involving long-term travel or long-term subsistence, it is highly recommended that travel claims should be filed within five (5) business days after the return from travel and, if practicable, no less frequently than once per pay period.
    - 10.2. To be considered filed on a timely basis, all travel claims must be filed within two (2) calendar months of the completion of the trip. If the travel claim is filed after this time, a Form GAO-513, *Delinquent Filed Travel Claim*, must be completed and additional approvals obtained.
      - 10.2.1. If practicable, travel claims should be filed no later than ten (10) calendar days after the end of the fiscal year in which the travel is completed.
      - 10.2.2. See SAAM 5056 for more information for most travelers and SAAM 5565 for board members.

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- 10.3. Travel claims must only be for expenses to which travelers are entitled to reimbursement in accordance with SAAM and agency travel policies. All travelers must certify that their travel expense claim represents actual, qualified amounts and/or miles incurred during authorized, official State business. Travel claims must be within allowable rates, unless accompanied by a travel exception approved by the State Comptroller or his delegee, and all required documentation must be attached.
11. Reimbursements will only be made for qualified travel expenditures necessary to conduct the business of the State. Personal expenditures will not be reimbursed.
12. When travel involves an individually operated motor vehicle, the type of vehicle prescribed by SAAM 5015, *Travel by Individually Operated Motor Vehicle*, is to be used.
13. A traveler must retain and provide required documentation—e.g., hotel bills, boarding passes, itinerary, incidental expenses over seventy-five dollars (\$75), etc.—to support any travel claim.
14. The State of Arizona helpful guide *Did You Know?* is posted on the travel page of the GAO Website at <https://gao.az.gov/travel>. This question-and-answer publication, which can be of significant value to travelers, covers some of the most commonly encountered items for a traveler to consider before and after embarking on his trip, but it is not all-inclusive. Travelers should consult the applicable section of SAAM for more detailed information about certain aspects of traveling for the State.