

TRAVEL APPLICATION

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## Expenses

OVERVIEW

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A new state law went into effect January 1, 2021, requiring state agencies, including the University of Nebraska, to reimburse meals on a “per diem” basis while employees are traveling for business.

The [Nebraska Revised Statute 81-1174 statute](#) directs the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to establish a percentage of the federal per diem rate for Nebraska agencies. DAS has announced that per-diem reimbursements for Nebraska travelers may not exceed 70 percent of the federal rate for the city to which the employee is traveling.

As of January 1, 2021, employees will no longer need to submit itemized receipts for meal reimbursements. Exceptions may include employees on grant-sponsored travel, who may still need to submit receipts in accordance with the requirements of the sponsor. Employees on grant-sponsored travel should connect with their campus office of sponsored programs to determine whether receipts will be needed for meal reimbursement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**Q. Beginning Jan. 1, is there a different process for completing a travel expense report in Concur?**

A. No, the process of completing a travel expense report in Concur will not change. Meals provided by other parties will still need to be identified (a hotel, a conference, a non-university business colleague, etc.), but itemized meal receipts are no longer required. Exceptions are employees on grant-sponsored travel whose sponsors may require documentation for meal reimbursements.

**Q. How was the 70 percent rate determined for meal reimbursements?**

A. In accordance with state law, the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services conducted a fiscal analysis and determined that reimbursing meals at 70 percent of the federal per diem rate was appropriate. At that rate, the new law will be budget-neutral for the state.

**Q. If traveling on a grant-sponsored trip, does the new law mean reimbursement will be made without submitting receipts?**

Grant sponsors may still require itemized meal receipts for reimbursement at 70 percent of the federal rate. Check with the campus office of sponsored programs or department’s grant liaison to determine whether receipts will be required for reimbursement.

**Q. Is there a new per diem rate for lodging as well as meals?**

A. No, the per diem law only applies to meals. The University of Nebraska does not have a cap for lodging rate reimbursements. However, employees are expected to be good stewards of university resources and to choose reasonably priced lodging when traveling on business.

**Q. Can an employee pay for a colleague's meal while traveling and be reimbursed?**

A. No. If traveling with colleagues, everyone will need to pay for their own meals and submit their own expense reports to be reimbursed.

**Q. What about paying for group meals during official functions, like meals with visiting faculty or guest speakers, recruitment meals or receptions for faculty or staff, or meals during retreats or training sessions? Can I pay for those with my personal credit card and be reimbursed?**

A. Personal credit cards are no longer allowed for "Official Functions" events. Per the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) expenses for official functions, conferences, hearings, interviews, or group meetings while in Travel Status or non-travel status will no longer be allowed using a personal credit card as the form of payment. An official function includes but is not limited to recruiting new faculty/staff members meals/receptions, visiting faculty, guest speaker(s) and/or consultant meal/reception, faculty/staff retreat/training, session with external presenter(s), advisory board meeting (composed all or in-part of external members), student orientation or another student recognition event. Review the [NU Travel Policy](#) for further details.

**Q. Do official functions have to abide by the Per Diem model?**

A. No, the Per Diem model does not apply to official function events. However, as good stewards of the University, it is suggested to use the GSA.gov guidelines for the city of the official function for meal expenses.

**Q. Are separate reimbursements for meal taxes and gratuity allowed?**

A. No, the federal reimbursement rate incorporates taxes and tips. Travelers will not be reimbursed separately for those costs.

**Q. Will departure and return times still need to be entered when completing an expense report in Concur?**

A. Yes, start and end times for each expense report will still be required.

**Q. Does the per diem model apply to guests and contractors of the University of Nebraska?**

A. Yes. This policy applies to all University employees traveling on approved University business and/or whose travel is paid and/or reimbursed by the University and to non-University personnel doing business with or for the University as stated within the policy.

**Q. Does the per diem model apply for trips to Alaska, Hawaii, and foreign destinations?**

A. Yes. Per diem applies to all travel, including beyond the continental United States.

**Q. What city is used to determine the per diem rate for reimbursement? Is there a website with detailed information on the federal rates?**

A. Reimbursement will be at 70 percent of the federal rate for the city that is the final destination of that day. Detailed information on the federal rates in U.S. cities can be found on the [U.S. General Services Administration website](#). Information regarding foreign per diem rates by location can be found [here](#).

**Q. Who can be contacted regarding other questions with travel and Concur?**

A. Faculty and staff are invited to contact the University of Nebraska system's Travel Office at [traveloffice@nebraska.edu](mailto:traveloffice@nebraska.edu) or (402) 554-3456 with questions. Employees are also encouraged to sign up for the [NU travel listserv](#) to receive up-to-date travel information.