I. POLICY

This policy shall apply to all County employees, elected and appointed officials, and any other person who submits a travel or expense voucher to the County for reimbursement.

The responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy rests with each traveler’s department head. The Administrator and/or the Administrator’s designee reserves the right to question travel vouchers which appear to violate the intent of this policy or to waive, where special circumstances warrant, any regulation/requirement herein.

All officers, employees, and persons traveling on official business are expected to exercise the appropriate level of care in incurring expenses, recognizing the use of public funds to support these expenses. The person authorized to approve reimbursement of expenses is the traveler’s department head and/or designee.

The County Administrator and/or the Administrator’s designee is responsible for interpretation and enforcement of this policy as they apply to all County employees, elected officials, and non-County personnel but excluding the County Administrator. The Finance and Administration Committee of the Board of Commissioners is responsible for interpretation and enforcement of this policy as they apply to the County Administrator, and may hear appeals of the Administrator’s interpretation of this policy.

II. STATUTORY REFERENCES

Internal Revenue Service Code
The Board of Commissioners may establish such rules and regulations regarding the business concerns of the County as the Board considers necessary and proper. See: MCL 46.11(m); Act 156 of 1851, as amended.

III. COUNTY LEGISLATIVE OR HISTORICAL REFERENCES

The original Board policy on this subject matter was adopted in January 28, 1992, Resolution Number: BC 92-58

Board of Commissioners Resolution Number and Policy Adoption Date: B/C 12-151, August 28, 2012

Board of Commissioner Resolution Number and Review Date: B/C 12-145, August 14, 2012

Name and Date of Last Committee Review: Planning and Policy: March 8, 2018

Last Review by the Internal Policy Review Team: February 13, 2018
IV. PROCEDURES

A. General Information

1. All expenses must be annotated. A person must substantiate an expenditure for travel by adequate records or by sufficient evidence corroborating his/her own statement as to: (a) amount, (b) time and place, (c) business purpose, and (d) business relationship to taxpayers (IRS Code Section 954A) Also, an arrangement is not a reimbursement or an express expense allowance arrangement if it (a) does not require the employee to substantiate the covered expenses to the employer or (b) allows an employee to retain amounts in excess of substantiated covered expenses (IRS Code Section 941A).

2. Use of credit cards or County issued purchasing cards will be accepted if supported by an itemized receipt.

3. Actual travel expenses of persons, other than County employees, who are called upon to contribute time and services as consultants, advisers or volunteers, must be authorized by the appropriate department head and/or designee. Documentation must be furnished as required by these regulations. The voucher must include an explanation/justification for the expense incurred by the consultant, advisor, or volunteer.

4. Authority for Travel: All travel other than normally assigned in-County travel and travel of less than one day (not overnight), shall be duly authorized and approved by the department head and/or designee. Sufficient budgeted funds must be available for such travel except that the Board of Commissioners may authorize travel and provide non-budgeted funds upon special request.

5. Advances for Travel: Normally, all travelers on official business for the County are expected to provide themselves with funds to cover their expenses. (Reimbursements will be processed in weekly check runs).

a. The County will pay direct the following expenses:

   1). Registration costs for conferences and seminars.

   2). Public transportation costs (i.e., air, boat, bus or rail).

   3). Lodging charges.

b. In unusual cases, an actual advance can be requested. The advance will be determined by using the per diem guidelines established in this policy and the following are met:
1). The travel advance is authorized by the Administrator and/or the Administrator’s designee who is to ensure that the advance is reasonable and complies with these regulations.

2). Upon the traveler’s return, a final accounting of the actual expenses incurred plus required receipts will be submitted to the Fiscal Services Department within fifteen (15) days on an Expense Voucher.

B. Expense Vouchers

1. The Expense Voucher form is to be used for reimbursement of expenses.

2. The expenses of only one person shall be included on a single expense voucher, except when an employee in a custodial capacity is responsible for and pays expenses of others who accompany him or her. Names of others must be recorded on the expense voucher.

3. Itemized receipts must be attached for all items of expenses. Any receipt not submitted where required by this policy may cause the expense for same to be denied or reimbursed at rates determined by the Administrator and/or the Administrator’s designee.

4. Conference and seminar agendas shall be submitted in instances where lodging will be requested for reimbursement. Conference and seminar agendas, whenever such agendas exist, shall be submitted in instances where meal costs will be requested for reimbursement.

5. Expense vouchers shall be submitted within thirty (30) days after incurring the expenditures.

6. The department head and/or designee approving the expense voucher is responsible for the certification of all items of expense as being necessary, correct and not in conflict with this policy. Questions from Fiscal Services regarding an expense voucher will first be directed to the department head and/or designee that signed the expense voucher.

C. Transportation

1. All travel must be by “usually” traveled route. In case a person travels by an indirect route for his or her convenience, or uses a slower or more expensive travel route, any extra costs shall be borne by the traveler and reimbursement for expenses will be based on only such charges as would have been incurred by a usually traveled route. For example, a person has a conference in Denver, Colorado, scheduled to start Monday at 8:30 a.m. and conclude Friday at 11:00 a.m. The airlines schedule would allow the traveler to depart Sunday and return Friday. If, for whatever reason, the individual elects to fly home on Saturday,
lodging for Friday night and meal costs after Friday afternoon would not be reimbursed by the County.

2. Public Carrier: The expense of traveling by public carrier (rail, airplane, boat) will be allowed on the basis of actual cost. All travelers are expected to travel by the most economical mode of transportation. Transportation expense in excess of the cost of coach-class airfare and associated costs, e.g. baggage, will not be allowed unless justification is given and the approval of the Administrator and/or the Administrator’s designee is obtained before leaving on the proposed trip.

3. Private Automobile: If travel is by privately owned automobile, the traveler will be reimbursed at the rate established by the Board of Commissioners (see Mileage Policy). If the travel is by private automobile, the maximum allowance will be the established mileage rate or coach-class airfare (round trip determined 30 days in advance of trip) and associated charges as would have been incurred by a usually traveled route, whichever is the lesser amount.

4. Any transportation arrangements other than what is covered above will require specific approval by the Administrator and/or the Administrator’s designee, prior to commencing travel.

D. Lodging

1. The actual paid lodging receipt is required for lodging reimbursement. Any change in hotel charges during continuous occupancy by an employee must be explained on the voucher. Documentation must show lowest available single occupancy rate as certified by the hotel or other lodging. IRS Tax Code Section 954A: A taxpayer must have documentary evidence for any lodging expense while traveling away from home.

2. When a traveler who is being reimbursed by the County shares a hotel or other lodging with non-County reimbursed travelers (family members, friends, etc.), reimbursement to the traveler will be as follows:

   a. If a hotel or other lodging is shared with one or more non-County travelers who receive no travel reimbursement from another source, reimbursement to the traveler will be at the rate of single occupancy as certified by the hotel or other lodging (the rate of single occupancy must be documented on the expense voucher) regardless of the number of persons and/or rooms occupied. At no time will reimbursement exceed the room rate actually paid by the County reimbursed travelers (i.e. single room cost exceeds double room rate).

   b. If a hotel or other lodging is shared with a County or non-County traveler on County business who is receiving reimbursement for travel from another budget or source, reimbursement will be reduced by a proportionate amount of the bill, based on the number of persons occupying the room.
3. Only out-of-county lodging will be reimbursed. Additionally, lodging in counties adjacent to Ottawa County (Muskegon, Kent, and Allegan) is generally not allowed, unless specific approval by the Administrator and/or the Administrator’s designee is secured prior to travel.

E. Miscellaneous Expenses

1. Miscellaneous expenses incidental to official County travel shall be held to the minimum amount required for essential and efficient conduct of County business. The following miscellaneous items are reimbursable with appropriate receipts:

   a. Registration Fees: Enrollment or registration fees for conventions and meetings, associations or organizations are allowable for individuals attending as official representatives of the County. Receipts must be attached to the voucher. Registration literature must be attached indicating if meals are included in the fee. If meals are included in the registration fee, corresponding meals are not reimbursable.

   b. Parking Fees: Reimbursement for parking fees is allowable, with receipts.

   c. Taxi Cab: Necessary taxi cab fares will be allowed with receipts. If receipts are not available, a full explanation is required.

   d. Car Rental: Allowable only if: (a) approved in advance of travel by the Administrator or the Administrator’s designee, (b) it is more advantageous for County business and (c) more economical than some other mode of transportation. Explanation and receipt are required.

   e. Fax and Internet: Charges are allowable when necessary for official business. An explanation and receipt is required including the nature of the business necessitating the expense.

   f. Personal Expenses: The County will not reimburse for the following: fees and tips for valets\(^1\), flight insurance, housekeeping/maid service, alcoholic beverages, cleaning and pressing clothing, renting movies, snacks, and similar personal expenses.

   g. Personal Phone Calls: An employee is allowed one reimbursed phone call home (duration not to exceed 5 minutes) for each day away.

   h. Health Club Costs: Reimbursement for reasonable costs not to exceed $10.00 per day for use of health club facilities during travel greater than one day. Receipts are required for reimbursement.

\(^1\) Fees and tips for valet charges will be reimbursed, when accompanied with receipts, when such charges are incurred as a necessary expense of the trip and not for the convenience of the traveler.
i. Baggage Handling: Charges for handling and checking baggage at hotels, depots, and terminals are allowable, when such charges are incurred as a necessary expense of the trip and not for the convenience of the traveler. The allowable rate shall not exceed $2.00 at each point of handling, except for airline baggage fees which are allowable for up to one piece of checked baggage.

j. Toll Bridge, Toll Road, and Ferry Boat Expenses: Toll bridge, toll road and ferry boat expenses are allowed with receipts.

F. Meals

1. The following guidelines are to be used regarding meal reimbursements. When travel commences before 7:00 a.m. or extends beyond 8:00 p.m. or they are out of the County at a conference, seminar, training session, or other approved County business, a meal reimbursement is allowed. Whenever meals are included in the registration fee, provided by public transportation or paid by others, the traveler should not be entitled to any allowance for those particular meals; examples:

   a. Departure – June 1, 9:00 a.m. Return – June 5, 4:30 p.m. Allowable – June 1, lunch and dinner; June 2 through June 4, three (3) full day meals; June 5, breakfast and lunch plus four (4) days lodging.

   b. Departure – June 1, 3:00 p.m. Return – June 2, 10:30 a.m. Allowable – June 1, dinner and lodging, June 2 - breakfast.

2. Meals will not be reimbursed for non-County travelers (spouses, members of a family, friends, etc.)

3. In-county meals will be reimbursed for Associations or Organization meetings with a receipt.

4. Guest Meals: The cost of guest meals is reimbursed only if it can be shown that such cost is necessary to conduct official County business and has prior approval of the Administrator. In no case will the amount allowed be in excess of the maximum established in this policy. Full explanation must be given on the voucher, including the name, position, and employer of the guest, nature of business discussed and how it relates to the County as required by the IRS Code. The total cost of the meals for guests cannot exceed the amount permitted an employee. A detailed receipt is required for a guest meal.

5. Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable by the County. Alcoholic beverages, to the maximum extent possible, should not be listed on the itemized receipt submitted with an Expense Voucher, but should rather be paid by the traveler separately.
6. Food Services/Tips: The maximum allowable tip for meals is 20% of the actual meal cost, excluding alcoholic drinks.

7. Meals included in the registration fee of conventions, meetings, associations or organizations are generally not reimbursable. Guidelines for the limited exception to this policy include dietary restrictions of a traveler or meals that are limited in the scope of offerings such as some continental breakfasts or appetizer dinners. An explanation of the exception must be included in cases where registration materials indicate a meal is provided as part of the registration fee.

8. The following are the maximum rates established for meal reimbursement with receipts:

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<th>In-State</th>
<th>Select Cities²</th>
<th>Traverse City/Leland</th>
<th>Out-of-State</th>
<th>Select Cities³</th>
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G. Travel Outside the Contiguous 48 States

1. Reimbursement for all expenses related to conferences or travel outside the contiguous 48 states must be approved in advance of the travel by the Finance and Administration Committee.

V. REVIEW PERIOD

The Internal Policy Review Team will review this Policy at least once every two years, and will make recommendations for changes to the Planning & Policy Committee.