**BUSINESS AND FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

*Office of Procurement - TSU Travel*

Effective: 9/1/2026

# GENERAL AND GROUP TRAVEL POLICY

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|---|---|
| **Policy Number** | 561-01 |
| **Approval Authority** | Chief Financial Officer |
| **Responsible Administrator** | Director of Procurement Services |
| **Responsible Office** | The University Travel Office |
| **Policy Contact** | Director of Procurement Services - Travel |

# GENERAL AND GROUP TRAVEL POLICY

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## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

All employees of Tennessee State University (TSU) who undertake travel as part of their official duties must strictly adhere to the university's travel policy. This policy is designed to ensure responsible management of travel expenditures and compliance with institutional guidelines. Importantly, the provisions outlined in this policy may also extend to individuals other than university employees who are authorized to travel at the university's expense, ensuring clarity and consistency in travel-related practices.

It is critical to note that no travel authorization will be granted to any employee without prior approval, and consequently, no reimbursements for travel-related expenses will be processed unless they adhere to the established policies and procedures. To promote fiscal responsibility and sustainability, employees are strongly encouraged to minimize travel expenses whenever possible while still fulfilling their official responsibilities.

All staff members should familiarize themselves with the specific stipulations of the travel policy to ensure compliance and to facilitate a smoother reimbursement process. By following these guidelines, employees contribute to the effective stewardship of university resources.

## 2.0 IMPORTANCE AND REASON FOR THE POLICY

TSU's travel policy is essential for ensuring fiscal responsibility, compliance, and the safety of travelers. It establishes guidelines for expenses, approvals, and risk management, ensuring that funds are appropriately utilized for official business while safeguarding the well-being of students and staff on university-related trips, particularly those abroad. The policy effectively balances the promotion of valuable experiences with risk mitigation, providing clear procedures for reimbursement and maintaining institutional accountability for the use of public funds and resources.

## 3.0 DEFINITIONS

I. **Authorized Travel -** is defined as travel that is necessary for the proper execution of official University business, or in justifiable pursuit of the University's educational and research objectives. It will be limited to meetings and conferences of a professional nature which will increase the attending employees' usefulness to the University.

II. **Business Expenses -** are defined as ordinary and necessary, having a "bona-fide" business purpose and otherwise qualify as a deductible expense per the Internal Revenue Code (IRC).

III. **Corporate Travel Cards -** are defined as travel credit cards that eligible employees can receive. The employee is responsible for all charges to the credit cards. Only actual business expenses can be incurred.

IV. **Group Travel -** is defined as a group traveling as a single unit that does not consist entirely of University personnel.

V. **Individual Travel -** is defined as a trip that an individual plans and organizes on their own, rather than through a package tour or group itinerary, handling all aspects of the journey, such as booking accommodations, transportation, and activities.

VI. **Necessary Expenses -** are defined as an ordinary and appropriate cost incurred while traveling for university business purposes away from your home**.** The cost must not be lavish or extravagant, and it must be documented.

VII. **Official Travel Status -** is defined as the status of an employee who is considered on official travel status at the time of departure from the employee's official workstation or residence, whichever is applicable, for traveling on University business.

**VIII.** **Ordinary Expenses -** are defined as a business cost that is both common and accepted and is incurred while traveling away from home for work. The expense must be both "ordinary" and "necessary," but it cannot be lavish or extravagant.

**IX.** **Out-of-Country Travel –** also known as “international travel”, is defined as any travel that takes you outside the borders of your home country. This includes crossing national borders into a foreign country and often involves requirements like passports and visas

**X.** **Travel Exceptions -** are defined as permitted deviations from the University’s standard travel policy guidelines, requiring pre-approval for specific, situation-based adjustments. These exceptions are granted for situations like higher lodging rates due to a conference location or medical necessity.

## 4.0 PROCEDURES

### I. Travel Overview

A. All travel must be approved in advance. The authorizing form is the Travel Requisition Form. All employees should obtain prior authorization for individual, group, in-state, out-of-state, and out-of-country travel.

B. Travel reimbursement is limited to expenses incurred upon travel authorized in advance. Membership dues and subscriptions are not reimbursable as travel expenses.

C. Travel reimbursement must be requested on a Claim for Travel Expense Form. Reimbursement for travel expenses will be limited to expenses incurred upon travel authorized in advance.

D. Travel by groups requires different processing than individual travel. In all cases, team and group transportation will be arranged through established institutional procedures, and travel itineraries are to be arranged in advance.

E. Exceptions to TSU's travel regulations are established in compliance with the State of Tennessee. The institution has authority to make exceptions regarding lodging and meal rate exceptions.

F. A Travel Requisition Form must be completed by the traveling employee to authorize the work-related travel even if no expenses are incurred or the employee does not plan to seek reimbursement.

G. These policies and procedures apply to all employees of the University regardless of the original source of the funds to the University (unrestricted or restricted).

## II. Approval to Travel (Travel Requisition Form)

A. Tennessee State University employees seeking approval to travel on University business must complete and submit a Travel Requisition Form in advance of the travel. An approved Travel Requisition Form is required to authorize all travel, including travel not requiring expense reimbursement.

B. The departmental budget **MUST** have available funds under the travel budget (73000). If funds are not available, a budget revision must be processed prior to the Travel Requisition being submitted.

C. All applicable information **MUST** be included on the Travel Requisition Form. The Post Office box number should be included with the department name.

D. All reasonably expected expenses need to be anticipated and included on the Travel Requisition Form to authorize the expenditure and reimbursement. Unanticipated expenditures will result in delayed reimbursement while a Travel Supplement Requisition is processed.

E. The Travel Requisition Form must be signed by the employee traveling and forwarded to the Travel Office for approval. An electronic version of this form must be submitted to the Travel Office via the university's on-line procurement system. All required approvals will be via the electronic system.

F. The Travel Office will obtain approval from the President or their designee for the following:

- Blanket in-state travel
- Out-of-state travel
- Group travel
- Requests for travel advances
- Exceptions to lodging rates or meal rates

G. An approved copy of the Travel Requisition Form will be forwarded to the originating office by the Travel Office.

H. The original copy of the Travel Requisition and related paperwork will be forwarded to Accounts Payable.

## III. Air Travel

A. All air travel charged directly to the University must be arranged through the University's official travel agency and authorized by the Travel Office. The employee **CANNOT** authorize the travel agency to issue the airline ticket and bill the University. An employee can purchase airline tickets directly from other travel agencies and be reimbursed by the University. However, the employee must **NOT** obligate the University until the Travel Requisition is approved at all required levels.

1. A Travel Requisition and approvals are needed to book a flight.

2. Travelers **MUST** contact the University's authorized travel agency to obtain flight information, determine the cost of the airline ticket and make reservations. Direct Travel is the only travel agency authorized to bill the University for airline tickets.

3. Employees requesting travel by air must indicate "air" as the mode of travel on the Travel Requisition Form and indicate the price of the ticket as quoted by the travel agent.

4. It is the responsibility of the traveler to review the itinerary to confirm its accuracy. The travel agency should be contacted immediately if there is a problem.

5. The travel agency will charge the university's account for the airline tickets.

B. Other Travel Agencies

1. If an employee makes arrangements through another travel agency, the employee must pay for the airline ticket and be reimbursed by the University. Even when using a different travel agency, the employee should **NOT** obligate themselves by ordering the ticket until the Travel Requisition is approved at all required levels.

2. If the employee has made air travel arrangements through an agency other than the contracted travel agent, it must be reflected on the Travel Requisition Form to avoid unnecessary authorization to the authorized agent.

## IV. Athletic Travel

All Tennessee State University athletic travel must follow University travel policies. The University recognizes the unique characteristics associated with travel by athletic personnel, teams, and other groups. This

section addresses practical considerations for, and is applicable only to, travel related specifically to the performance of intercollegiate athletic recruiting, athletic team travel, and other group travel. TSU will comply with all pertinent regulations of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the athletic conference of which the University is a member.

In all cases, team and group transportation will be arranged through established institutional procedures, and travel itineraries are to be arranged in advance.

A. Athletic Team Travel

1. Travel Requisition Forms must be processed and approved in advance of the trip.

2. The President or designee must approve University officials, and guests of the University, who accompany the team or group on trips, in advance.

3. A roster of all individuals on a particular trip must be attached to the Travel Requisition Form.

4. A travel advance for athletic team travel, or other group travel, in the amount of one hundred percent (100%) of the estimated trip expenses may be allowed. One (1) person from the Athletic Department, or other appropriate University department or office, who is familiar with the travel regulations will be responsible for the advance and all bills connected with team or group travel.

5. Receipts are required for all team or group travel expenses, consistent with this policy.

6. Actual lodging expenses (unless reduced by department) will be reimbursed. Documentation must be maintained in the Athletic Department, or other appropriate department or office, indicating that various cost alternatives have been explored before making all arrangements and reservations. However, if such arrangements are made by the University's Travel Office, that office should maintain the appropriate documentation.

7. Miscellaneous expenses, such as movies while on team trips, must be supported by receipts. Telephone calls by staff members for business purposes may be claimed consistent with this policy.

8. Team transportation will be arranged through the University's established procedures using the official travel agency or by assistance of the Travel Office.

9. Individual meals associated with team or group travel will be reimbursed per CONUS per diem rates, consistent with this policy. All team or group meals, (including pre-game and after-game meals for athletic teams) will be reimbursed at actual cost. Gratuities, not to exceed reasonable and customary rates, are allowed. Appropriate documentation and receipts are required.

B. Athletic Recruiting

1. Staff members are responsible for compliance with pertinent NCAA and conference rules regarding student recruits.

2. Coaches traveling as individuals for athletic recruiting purposes must follow the same policies as other University employees.

3. Staff members engaged in recruiting are allowed a cash advance in the amount of 80% of the estimated trip expenses.

4. The name of the student recruit should be listed directly on the Travel Requisition Form in the explanation section.

5. Guest Meals. The actual cost of guest meals may be claimed when incurred by a staff member for recruiting purposes. Such claims must be submitted in appropriate detail. Receipts are required.

6. Student Recruits

a. Lodging in University facilities should be arranged, if space is available. If University space is not available, arrangements may be made for lodging in local motels/hotels, and, with the approval of the Athletic Director, may be charged to the Athletic Department.

b. If available, the use of University dining services should be arranged, and costs may be charged to the Athletic Department. If necessary, staff members will be reimbursed at cost for off-campus meals, with reasonable and customary gratuities allowed. Receipts must accompany claims.

c. Transportation may be arranged through a local travel service and charged to the Athletic Department, with the approval of the Athletic Director.

d. Also, with the Athletic Director's approval, a University Travel Card may be used to purchase air fare for a student recruit, at the cheapest rate that allows a refund back to the card in the event the recruit cancels the visit.

e. Automobile mileage may be reimbursed to a student recruit at the maximum rate allowed under this policy for the use of a personal vehicle.

f. Entertainment expenses may be reimbursed at cost within NCAA and conference rules.

## V. Blanket Travel Requisitions

A. Employees of Tennessee State University who are required to travel frequently as part of their official duties may seek approval for a Blanket Travel Authorization. The purpose of this requisition is to streamline paperwork for employees who travel within the state regularly. All Blanket Travel Authorizations must receive prior approval from the President or an authorized designee.

B. Blanket Travel Authorizations must be completed and processed through the same channels as any Travel Requisition. Once processed and approved, this Blanket Travel Authorization will be used to support Claims for Traveling Expense Forms submitted for the period of time covered by the Blanket Travel Authorization.

C. All information must be completed on the Travel Requisition. Special attention should be given to the following areas:

1. Destination: Clearly indicate blanket travel.

2. Departure Date and Return Date: Indicate the first and last date the Blanket Travel Authorization covers. The Blanket Travel Authorization **MUST** be approved prior to the first date of travel.

3. Explanation: Provide a clear explanation of the purpose of the Blanket Travel Authorization.

4. Total Amount of Requisition: Indicate total expenses anticipated for the period covered by the Blanket Travel Authorization. Reimbursement for travel expenses will not be processed above the total amount approved. Unanticipated expenditures will result in delayed reimbursement while a supplemental Travel Requisition is processed. **An approved Blanket Travel Authorization does not authorize exceptions to the meal and lodging rates.**

## VI. Cash Advances

A. Tennessee State University employees who travel in the performance of their official duties will be reimbursed for authorized travel expenses. Cash advances for travel expenses are **NOT** issued in most circumstances.

B. Requests for cash advances for travel expenses must be indicated on the Travel Requisition Form.

C. Requests for travel advances **MUST** be received in the Travel Office at least 30 days prior to the travel date in order to process the check request. The approved Travel Requisition will be forwarded to Accounts Payable for check disbursement prior to the trip.

D. Travel advances will be approved under the following circumstances:

1. University employees who travel with a group of students may receive a cash advance for the students and the employees' travel expenses.

2. Cash advances may be made to staff members engaged in athletic recruiting when such advances are approved.

If an employee qualifies for a cash advance based on one of the above criteria, documentation as described above must be attached to the Travel Requisition Form when requesting the cash advance. The Travel Requisition Form will be returned if the documentation is not provided.

E. All cash advances must be approved by the President or designee.

F. An amount equal to 80% of the estimated expenses is allowed as a cash advance; however, no advance less than $100 will be made.

G. Employees traveling with a student or students can receive a cash advance for 100% of the estimated expenses.

H. Cash advances issued for canceled trips must be returned to the cashier within 72 hours. A copy of the cash receipt **MUST** be submitted to Accounts Payable.

I. Unused cash advances **MUST** be returned to the cashier within 72 hours. A copy of the cash receipt **MUST** be attached to the Claim for Traveling Expenses Form.

J. A copy of the canceled Travel Requisition and written notification to cancel the trip **MUST** be submitted to the Travel Office.

## VII. Credit Cards (Corporate Travel Card)

A. Tennessee State University provides an opportunity for full-time employees to apply for a University Travel Card. Full-time faculty and staff who anticipate traveling on behalf of the University are eligible to apply for the Travel Card with supervisor's approval.
If the University Travel Card is approved and issued to the employee, the employee is responsible for all expenses occurred with the card. Any issues related to the card are timely reported to the Card Administrator to resolve with the University's current Banking Partner. (Refer to Travel Card Policy)

B. Tennessee State University employees eligible for the University Travel Card must use the card when incurring travel and business expenses while on a trip using University funds. The Travel Card may only be used for appropriate and allocable expenses. Mandatory training is required before issuance of the Travel Card. (Refer to Travel Card Policy)

## VIII. Group Travel Related Direct Payments (Registration Fees, Lodging, Transportation, etc.)

A. Tennessee State University employees authorized to travel on official University business will be reimbursed for all travel expenses within the University travel guidelines. All travel expenses can be estimated on the Travel Requisition Form and reimbursed after the trip **OR** some group travel-related expenses can be paid directly to the source by initiating a Purchase Requisition for Travel Form.

B. Travel Requisitions are used to pay University employees or other individuals traveling on behalf of the University. Purchase Requisitions are used to pay sources outside the University. Purchase Requisitions for Travel **CANNOT** be used to reimburse an employee for travel related expenses.

C. The Travel Office must issue a purchase order for direct payments for lodging or transportation.

D. Direct payment for some group travel related expenses may be more convenient than reimbursement. The following procedures must be followed to obtain approval for direct payment of such travel-related expenses as registration fees, hotel or transportation.

1. The Travel Requisition **MUST** be initiated **WELL IN ADVANCE** of the trip to allow time for additional processing related to the Purchase Requisition for Travel. Please allow up to three weeks for processing these requests.

2. A Purchase Requisition for Travel form must be completed and a copy of the registration form attached. All information must be included on the Purchase Requisition for Travel form, i.e., the vendor (source) to be paid, FOAP, description, total price, all appropriate signatures and/or electronic approvals. **Indicate a "date needed" if there is a registration deadline.**

3. The Purchase Requisition for Travel Form **MUST** be attached to the related Travel Requisition Form.

4. Travel expenses included on the Purchase Requisition for Travel for payment directly to the source **CANNOT** be included on the Travel Requisition Form. For example, registration fees should not be included on the Travel Requisition if a Purchase Requisition for Travel is submitted for direct payment of registration fees.

## IX. Group Travel (Other Than Athletics)

A. All Tennessee State University group travel must follow both Athletic and Other Group Travel.

B. Travel by student groups or other groups of participants in programs or activities of the University will have their travel expenses reimbursed.

1. Travel Requisition Forms must be processed and approved in advance of the trip.

2. The Travel Requisition Form must be in the name of a TSU employee.

3. The Travel Requisition Form must indicate "Group Travel."

4. A roster of all individuals participating in the trip must be attached to the Travel Requisition Form, including individuals who are paying their own expenses. If several TSU employees are accompanying a student group, one TSU employee must designate the trip as group travel, attach a list of students to their Travel Requisition, and include all expenses for the group and the themselves.

5. Each additional TSU employee accompanying the group must submit a separate Travel Requisition Form indicating individual travel and including only their own estimated expenses.A Cash Advance in the amount of 100% of the estimated trip expenses will be allowed for the group and the coordinating employee. The TSU employee is responsible for the advance and all bills connected

with the group. Other TSU employees traveling with the group will not receive a cash advance.

## X. Lodging and Meal Rate Exceptions

A. Tennessee State University employees who travel on official University business will be reimbursed for lodging and meal expenses up to the maximum rates authorized in the CONUS per diem rates. Higher rates for lodging at the location of a convention or conference may be allowed up to the amount indicated in the convention or conference brochure. The expenses for an official banquet of a meeting or conference will be allowed provided a receipt is submitted.

B. The following procedures must be followed to receive an exception to the maximum lodging or meal reimbursement rate.

1. A "Travel Exception" of the Travel Requisition Form must be completed:

   - Indicate the rate charged per day by the convention or conference hotel including sales tax. If you do not know the sales tax amount, indicate a note "plus tax" beside the daily rate.

   - Indicate the amount charged for meals.

2. The convention or conference brochure which documents the lodging rates **MUST** be attached to the Travel Requisition Form to receive approval for the rate exception.

3. The lodging or meal reimbursement must be supported with actual receipts.

4. Reimbursement for meals will not be allowed when overnight travel is not involved.

5. Business meals will not be included in travel reimbursement.

6. All Travel Requisitions requesting lodging or meal rate exceptions **MUST** be approved by the President in **ADVANCE** of the trip.

## XI. Non-Affiliated Travelers

A. The same travel procedures apply to non-affiliated travelers as for University employees.

1. The Travel Requisition Form should be initiated by the requesting department and **MUST** be processed and approved in **ADVANCE** of the trip. The traveler's signature can be signed by the preparer of the Travel Requisition form and initialed since the individual is not available.

2. The Travel Requisition Form must be in the name of the non-affiliated traveler. Particularly important are a **COMPLETE ADDRESS and a CORRECT BANNER T-NUMBER**.

3. The Travel Requisition Form must provide a complete explanation for the trip.

4. The **traveler MUST** sign the Claim for Traveling Expenses form while on campus.

5. Checks for travel reimbursement will be mailed by Accounts Payable to the address indicated on the Travel Requisition Form.

## XII. Out-of-Country Travel

A. Authorization for out-of-country travel is subject to approval by the Vice President of the traveler's division and by the University President or designee. Out-of-country travel includes Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and all other locations outside the 48 states of the continental United States.

B. All out-of-country travel by the President MUST be approved by the Board of Trustees.

C. Out-of-Country Lodging. Lodging expenses incurred while out of the country will be reimbursed at actual expenses with receipts.

D. Out-of-Country Meals. Out-of-country meals are reimbursed at actual expense with receipts. If no receipts are provided, the maximum rate will be the maximum CONUS rate for out-of-state travel.

E. Employees traveling out-of-country must allow extra time for proper approvals.

## XIII. Reimbursement of Travel Expenses (Claim Form)

A. Proper completion and support of the Claim for Traveling Expenses form is required before any reimbursement can occur. Tennessee State University employees approved to travel on official University business will be reimbursed for all authorized travel expenses within the travel guidelines.

B. Reimbursement for travel expenses will only be allowed for actual expenses incurred.

C. Receipts are required for taxi fares, tolls and ferry fees.

D. Receipts are **NOT** required for meals **UNLESS** meal expenses exceed the maximum limitations outlined in the Travel Policy. If meals exceed the maximum, this expense must be anticipated prior to the trip and Part IV of the Travel Requisition must be approved in advance.

E. Lodging receipts are required and must itemize room charges and taxes.

F. The following procedures must be followed to receive reimbursement for travel expenses:

1. A Travel Requisition Form must be processed and approved prior to the trip. The original form is maintained in the Travel Office.

2. Claims for reimbursement of travel expenses should be **SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN THIRTY (30) DAYS** after completion of the trip. Claims submitted after this period **MUST** provide a written explanation for the delay.

3. If actual expenses are less than a cash advance, the difference should be indicated on the form, and a copy of the cash receipt should be attached to the claim form.

4. A Claim for Traveling Expenses Form must be completed as follows:

- All information must be indicated on the form.
- The "PO" number on the Travel Requisition Form should be indicated on the claim form in the upper right-hand corner.
- Expenses must be shown each day.
- Expenses incurred through a Purchase Requisition for Travel Form initiated by the department, such as registration fees, should **NOT** be included on the Claim Form.
- Expenses incurred through a University-wide contract, such as airline tickets, **SHOULD BE INCLUDED** on the claim form but deducted on the Less Temporary Allowance line of the claim form.

- The amounts to be reimbursed must total down and across on the form.

- If the employee receives a cash advance, this amount must be subtracted from the gross amount of the claim.

- All signatures must be original. The employee and the immediate supervisor (budgetary head) are the only required signatures.

- All appropriate receipts must be attached. The passenger copy of the airline ticket should be attached even if the University paid for the ticket directly.

- Reimbursement will not exceed the amount approved on the Travel Requisition unless the excess amount is sales tax on lodging. If actual expenses exceed estimated authorized expenses, a supplemental travel requisition must be processed and approved prior to reimbursement.

- Reimbursement for lodging will be reimbursed based on the maximum reimbursement rates as those maintained by the U.S. General Services Administration for federal employees within the continental United States (CONUS) rate table. The CONUS rate table list contains a standard reimbursement rate for lodging and meals and incidentals, and several pages of exceptions. Most destinations for out-of-state travel fall within the list of exceptions.

- Reimbursement for out-of-country lodging will be reimbursed at actual expenses with receipts.

- Reimbursement for out-of-country meals are reimbursed at actual expense with receipts. If no receipts are provided, the maximum rate will be the maximum CONUS rate for out-of-state travel.

- Reimbursement for employees will be made by direct deposit. Checks for visitors will be mailed to the address associated with the visitor's Banner T-Number.

## XIV. Supplemental Travel Requisition

A. Tennessee State University employees seeking approval to travel on official University business must complete and process a Travel Requisition Form. If the information included on the original, approved

Travel Requisition form is incorrect, a Travel Supplement Requisition may be required before full reimbursement can be made.

B. It is usually necessary to process Travel Supplement Requisitions after the trip because the change of information is not known until the trip actually occurs. The need for a Travel Supplement Requisition could result from:

- Incorrect estimated cost information.
- Unpredictable expenses occurred.
- Exception to the lodging rate was not requested nor approved. **NOTE:** If the approved cost estimate included the lodging exception rate, but Part IV of the original Travel Requisition was not completed, a Travel Supplement Requisition is required to obtain specific approval of the lodging rate from the President or their designee. A copy of the convention or conference hotel brochure indicating the exception rate must be attached to the Travel Supplement Requisition.
- Registration fees were not paid directly nor included on the original Travel Requisition form.

C. The departmental budget must have available funds under the travel account code to cover requests for additional expenses.

D. Travel Supplement Requisitions must follow the same approval process as the original Travel Requisition:

- The Travel Supplement Requisition must be signed by the employee and approved by the budgetary head (Dean/Director/Department Head).
- The approved Travel Requisition Form must be forwarded to the Office of Budget, Fiscal Planning and Travel for approval.

E. A Travel Supplement Requisition requires the following:

- The upper right-hand corner of the Travel Requisition form must indicate the new PR number.
- The original PO number must be referenced on the Travel Supplement.
- Required information on the Travel Supplement Requisition includes: (1) date (2) first two lines on the

Travel Requisition Form (3) the specific items to be amended (4) explanation for the need for a supplement.

## 5.0 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

- Tennessee Code Annotated §§ 4-3-1008 and 49-7-130

## 6.0 HISTORY

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| Policy 5.9.1 | Travel Policy | July 2022 |