

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES FOR RECRUITMENT, PRE-EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWS AND NEW APPOINTEES

1. **Who has authority to approve these travel and transportation expenses?**

The bureau director or equivalent has been delegated the authority for approval of these expenses.

Bureaus may determine which interviewees are eligible for payment of pre-employment interview travel expenses.

Bureaus may determine which positions qualify for payment of a new appointee's travel expenses to the first duty station.

Payment of these expenses must be in accordance with the General Services Administration's Federal Travel Regulations (FTR).

2. **Are there any restrictions or limitations imposed by the Office of Personnel Management or the Department to the approval of these travel and transportation payments?**

Office of Personnel Management regulations state that payment of these expenses for an individual candidate or new appointee is at the discretion of the employing agency.

The Department has delegated approval of these expenses to the bureau director or equivalent. A decision by one bureau that payment is appropriate for a particular position does not require a like decision by other bureaus filling similar positions. Likewise, a bureau's decision to pay or not to pay these expenses for a specific vacancy does not require the same decision for similar vacancies in the future.

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The Department requires bureaus to make every effort to ensure that the approval of these travel and transportation expenses is applied equitably and in the interest of the Government. All persons who inquire or apply for positions for which such expenses may be paid will be equally advised in this regard.

3. **What guidelines should bureaus follow to determine which vacancies should be approved for payment of these travel and transportation expenses?**

Bureaus should consider the availability of funds and whether it is more effective to conduct in-person interviews for a particular job or to offer a recruitment incentive to a particular candidate. (See Personnel Management Letter 91-5 (575) dated July 15, 1991 for guidance on providing recruitment bonuses.)

In determining which vacancies to approve for payment of these expenses, bureaus also should consider the following:

- Difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates for the position due to factors such as: the geographical location of the position; the shortage of applicants possessing the qualifications required to fill the position; and declinations due to the bureau's not paying travel/transportation expenses.
- The length of time that active, but unsuccessful, recruiting without offer of payment of travel expenses has been conducted.
- Whether other types of recruiting efforts would produce qualified candidates. Bureaus should explore using appropriate competitive examination registers and/or direct hire authorities; free and paid advertising; and contacts with schools, professional associations, and employment services.

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- Whether the shortage of qualified candidates could be addressed internally through job reengineering, use of automation, or training and development programs.

4. Are individuals who accept payment of their travel/transportation expenses under any obligation to the Department?

Individuals who accept payment of travel expenses for a pre-employment interview are under no obligation to accept employment or to repay the travel expenses.

A new appointee whose travel and transportation expenses to the first duty station are paid by the Department must agree, in writing, to remain in the service of the Federal Government for at least 12 months following appointment. (See Attachment for a sample Employment Agreement.)

When new appointees fail to remain in Federal service for the 12 months, they will be required to repay the Government the cost of the travel and transportation expenses. However, the bureau director or equivalent may waive this requirement for repayment if she/he finds that the reasons for not fulfilling the 12-month employment obligation are beyond the control of the new appointee.

5. Are there reporting requirements for this program?

Agencies must maintain records of payments made under this authority. To comply with this regulation, the Department requires bureaus to maintain a summary record of all actions taken under this authority. Information must include the number of actions taken and the titles, series, grades, and locations of positions for which payment was authorized. This information for the previous calendar year must be reported by the Assistant Secretaries to the Director of Personnel by January 15 of each year.

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6. **Where can I find the legal authority and regulatory guidance for payment of travel and transportation expenses for recruitment, pre-employment interviews, and new appointees?**

Legal authority for payment of these expenses is found in:
5 U.S.C. 5706b and 5723.

Regulatory guidance is found in:

5 CFR Part 572; and
41 CFR Chapters 301-304 (General Services
Administration's Federal Travel Regulations
(FTR)).

Payment of these expenses is also administered in
accordance with Comptroller General decisions:

60 CG 235 (1981);
B-185908 (1977);
40 CG 221 (1960); and
38 CG 483 (1959).

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Attachment

EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

In consideration for having my travel and transportation expenses to my first post of duty (duty station) paid by the Government, I hereby agree to remain in the employment of the Government of the United States for a period of not less than 12 months. This agreement is with the understanding that the cost of travel and transportation including that of my immediate family, household goods, and personal effects from (Place of residence at time of selection for appointment) to (First duty station) will be paid by the Government.

In the event that I fail to complete the above agreement, any money expended by the Government on account of such travel and transportation shall be recoverable from me as a debt due the United States.

I further understand that if I am separated from Federal Service for reasons beyond my control and acceptable to the (Name of employing Bureau) prior to the completion of the 12-month period of service, the cost of travel and transportation as agreed to above will be at Government expense and not recoverable from me.

Signature

Date

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