

# Travel Expenditures Supplemental Policy

## 1. POLICY

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**Issued:** February 11, 2025

**Last Revised:** June 11, 2025

**Applies to:** *Faculty (including part-time, adjunct and visiting faculty), postdoctoral scholars, staff and students (including graduate/undergraduate student workers and graduate assistants) employed by University of Southern California (“USC” or the “University”). This policy continues to apply to individuals who are on sabbatical or other leaves, or who are visiting other institutions.*

## 2. Policy Purpose

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As outlined in the March 24, 2025, letter to the community, “Update on USC’s Financial Planning and Resilience Efforts,” USC is taking many steps to protect the financial sustainability of our academic mission. This policy outlines institutional expectations for business travel, conference attendance, and professional development activities in alignment with the university’s directive to limit non-essential discretionary spending. It supplements USC’s university-wide travel policies and will remain in effect until further notice.

The university prioritizes travel that directly supports sponsored research, formal institutional roles, or mission-critical activities.

## 3. Scope and Application

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This policy applies to all travel using university funds or university-affiliated sources (grants, gifts, discretionary accounts).

## 4. Definitions

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N/A

## 5. Policy Details

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### Pre-Approval Requirement

All business travel and related activities must be **pre-approved in writing** by the traveler’s **supervising Dean or designee, or Senior Vice President or designee** prior to incurring any expenses or booking travel. Pre-approval documentation must:

- Clearly state the business purpose
- Identify the funding source
- Be included with the reimbursement request

Travel without written pre-approval is not eligible for reimbursement.

**Permitted Travel Activities**

To be eligible for reimbursement, travel must serve a documented university purpose and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Required for grant or contract obligations**, including project meetings or sponsor-mandated presentations
- **Formal invited role** at a conference (e.g., speaker, presenter, panelist, moderator, conference organizer)
- **Official institutional business** as designated by the Dean or SVP (e.g., regulatory visits, student/student-athlete recruitment, development/fundraising)
- **Athletic competitions**
- **Accreditation-related travel** or approved academic assignments
- **Externally funded** by a sponsor, grant, or donor gift explicitly supporting the travel
- **Essential early-career professional development** for junior faculty or staff, if aligned with unit priorities and with strong justification

**Travel Activities Not Permitted**

The following are **not eligible** for reimbursement using university funds:

- General attendance at conferences without an invited role or formal assignment (subject to above-noted exception for essential early-career professional development)
- Participation in conferences where **equivalent virtual alternatives** exist
- Unfunded or exploratory research collaboration travel
- Self-selected or optional professional development that can be reasonably deferred

**Additional Guidance and Points of Emphasis**

- **Extended personal stays** must be clearly documented, and only the business portion will be reimbursed.
- **Mileage reimbursement** must reflect the correct starting point (office vs. home) based on weekday or weekend travel.
- **Travel class** is limited to coach; upgrades are not reimbursable unless pre-approved with documented business justification.
- **Hosting external visitors** is permissible with department approval and must follow the same fiscal stewardship standards.

**6. Procedures**

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N/A

**7. Forms**

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N/A

**8. Responsibilities**

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**Compliance and Responsibility**

For questions about exceptions about this policy, please contact Business Services at [procurement@usc.edu](mailto:procurement@usc.edu) or call (213) 740-2281.

**9. Related Information**

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N/A

**10. Contacts**

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For more information or assistance, contact your school or unit's Business Office, or visit <https://sites.usc.edu/procurement/travel-expense>.