



**NORTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKS**

**Travel Policy**

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2021

**Administering Authority:** Finance and Budget

**Statutory Authority (if applicable):** G.S. 126

**Purpose:** To provide guidelines for North Carolina Office of the Commissioner of Banks (NCCOB) employees regarding travel procedures.

**Policy:** Travel policies followed by the NCCOB shall be the same as those in the State Budget Manual and the Department of Commerce Travel Policies unless granted authority for agency-specific rates up to the U.S. General Service Administration's (GSA) subsistence rates through the Annual Travel Policy Attestation and related requirements. This policy addresses administration within NCCOB with the following procedures. For an in-depth review of a specific policy, click on the link below:

State Budget Manual Policy:	<a href="#">OSBM State Budget Manuals</a>
FM-1 Travel Expense Policy:	<a href="#">Commerce FM-1 Policy</a>
Accounting Website:	<a href="https://www.nccob.org/NCCOBInternal/Acct/AcctMain.aspx">https://www.nccob.org/NCCOBInternal/Acct/AcctMain.aspx</a>

**Work Schedule:** It is the policy of the NCCOB to implement and administer a work schedule for office staff based on 40 hours, 5 days each week. Normal office hours are 8:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M., with 1 hour for lunch. However, these hours may be adjusted based on the needs of the division and with supervisory approval. Field staff work ten hours each day, Monday through Thursday. Normal hours for examiners will be 7:30 A.M. to 6:30 P.M., with one hour for lunch. However, these hours may be adjusted based on an institutions' inability to accommodate this schedule or on the needs of the division and supervisory approval. Examiners working in the Raleigh office whose duty station is more than 35 miles away will be allowed travel time to the office on Monday and from the office on Thursday. Travel time will be on the examiner's time all other days of the office assignment.

Field staff should leave their duty station no later than 7:30 A.M. on Monday on the first workday of the week and proceed directly to their assignment. Travel time should be based on the actual time needed to travel directly to the job. If necessary, estimations of travel time may be based on map applications such as MapQuest, Google Maps, etc. Exceptions may be made by the team supervisor as directed in an email or by the examination memo regarding initial start times. Authorized travel time at the end of the week should be based on the same criteria.

Examiners are discouraged from scheduling annual leave or sick leave while in travel status. Any such leave must receive prior approval from the team supervisor. Travel time is always provided for one round trip per week between the duty station and the assigned job location. Travel made in connection with scheduled annual or sick leave will require that either actual travel time be covered by leave or travel must be done outside normal work hours.

An employee in travel status who becomes ill or needs to return home due to an emergency, should notify their supervisor and the examiner in charge immediately. The employee should discuss their plans with their supervisor prior to returning to work.

**Cost-effective travel for state business:** NCCOB employees traveling on official state business are expected to utilize the most cost-effective and efficient method of travel. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, luxury accommodations, and services unnecessary, unjustified, or for the convenience or personal preference of the employee in the performance of official state business are prohibited.

### **Travel Eligible for Reimbursement**

**Official state business:** These policies are intended to apply only to NCCOB on official state business. Official state business occurs when the state employee or other person is traveling to:

1. attend approved job-related training, or
2. work on behalf of, officially represent, or provide a state service upon the State's request. Travel that would not directly benefit the State will not be reimbursable.

**In-state and out-of-state travel:** Subsistence costs are reimbursable for in-state and out-of-state travel on official state business. Out-of-state travel status begins when the employee leaves the state and remains in effect until the employee returns to the state. However, in-state allowances and subsistence rates apply when employees and other qualified official travelers use hotel and meal facilities located in North Carolina immediately prior to and returning from out-of-state travel during the same travel period.

### **Travel Reimbursement or Payment**

**Reimbursement Requests:** NCCOB employees travelling on state business are responsible for submitting reimbursement requests in accordance with internal agency policies. Requests for reimbursement and documented expenditures shall be filed in NCCOB Online within 30 days after the travel period ends for which the reimbursement is being requested.

Specific dates of lodging must be listed on the reimbursement request. Each meal reimbursement rate must be listed on the reimbursement request. Departure and arrival times must also be listed on the reimbursement request. Receipts are required for transportation cost reimbursements including air fare, rental vehicles, taxi, car service, mobile phone-ordered car service, airport shuttle service, public transportation, parking fees, tolls, and storage fees.

**Budget Authorization Documentation for Travel and Training:** Budget Authorizations (BDAs) are required to be completed by the NCCOB accounting division for all excess lodging in-state and **all out-of-state travel** for efficiency reasons.

The process for training BDAs begins with documentation of the specific training in the NCCOB Online system. This process will ensure that training is documented on employee training records and will guarantee that invoices for registration or airlines can be paid as soon as they are received. All travel related to training or seminars should have been coordinated through or communicated to the Director of Regulatory Training.

BDAs for out-of-state examination travel should be communicated to the Budget Office as soon as a trip or examination is planned, or a flight is made. To help assist in communicating all of the information needed to produce a BDA, employees are encouraged to complete the NCCOB Travel Checklist.

1. **All out-of-state travel** is separately authorized on a trip-by-trip basis with prior approval from an employee's supervisor. This travel may be authorized in an email or other written documentation which should be obtained prior to any expenses being incurred. Again, all out-of-state travel requires a BDA to be completed on NCCOB employees. BDA's must be approved and signed by the Commissioner of Banks or Deputy Commissioner of Banks, and the Chief Fiscal Officer (CFO). Accounting will attach a signed copy of the approved BDA to the reimbursement request, together with other documentation supporting the reason for the trip.
2. Requesting in-state travel with excess hotel expense over the allowable GSA approved rate requires a BDA to be completed by Commerce and can no longer be approved by NCCOB. Therefore, this request must be coordinated with NCCOB CFO prior to the expense being incurred and will require substantial planning.
3. Attendance at conventions, professional conferences, and group meetings by any employee in an official capacity where the attendee represents or is presumed to represent the Commissioner of Banks in an official capacity, must have processed this request through the employee training request system on NCCOB Online and have the prior written approval of the employee's supervisor, regardless of whether travel or expense

reimbursement is involved. All training which requires registration fees to be paid, regardless of the training occurring in-state or out-of-state, require a BDA to be completed. The NCCOB Online system coordinates the BDA process once the training has been entered and approved by the training director. A BDA will not be completed until the steps below are completed, which could delay payment of invoices and expenses.

These steps should be followed when requesting training:

- 1) Click on the “**Intranet**” icon
- 2) Click on “**NCCOB Online**”
- 3) Click on “**Operations – Employee & Training**”
- 4) Click on “**Request Approval for Training**”
- 5) Click on the “**Add New**” icon
- 6) **Enter all information requested**  
*Please note\* under the “Registration By” field the options selected will determine the information that should be entered. The options are either “Training Department or Self.” Generally, the “Self” option should be selected for training requests entered outside of the annual registration period of April/May, or for participation in online/teleconferences.*
- 7) Click on the “**Done**” icon
- 8) Click on the “**Submit for Approval**” icon

Supervisors should approve the training request as soon as possible to ensure registration in the course is confirmed and payment of applicable expenses is processed. Any questions should be communicated to the Director of Regulatory Training.

## **Travel Policies for State Employees**

**Subsistence Rates for Lodging and Meals:** NCCOB employees are eligible for subsistence allowances when in travel status. Subsistence is an allowance related to lodging and meal costs (including gratuities). **Travel status** means being away from the employee's normal duty station or home and, while traveling, the employee must be acting in his/her official capacity as required by his/her work activities.

**Conditional Authorization for Federal GSA Subsistence Rates:** NCCOB has chosen to set agency-specific rates equal to (not to exceed) the GSA subsistence rates.

The NCCOB Travel Policy must be published on the public website, and the Commissioner of Banks must submit a signed [Attestation Form](#) to OSBM each year by April 1. The location and date-specific rates for lodging and breakfast, lunch, and dinner can be found at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>, and are updated periodically. GSA rate adjustments for the first and last day of travel shall not apply.

**Conditions for Lodging Reimbursement:** Prior written approval by the Commissioner of Banks or the Commissioner's designee must be obtained to qualify for reimbursement for overnight stays. Supervisory personnel certifying the reimbursement requests should be documented and sent to the NC Department of Commerce each year noting the employee's approval authority, full name, title, signature and initials by July 1<sup>st</sup> of every year. Supervisors approve reimbursement requests in NCCOB Online confirming travel as necessary and proper and must require documentation from the employee to substantiate that the overnight lodging was necessary and accomplished. The travel reimbursement calculations must involve mileage from the starting address of the employee's regularly assigned duty station or home, whichever is less, to the final travel destination, to receive approved reimbursement.

Overnight lodging may only be authorized and paid to support business needs and final travel destinations that equal or exceed 35 miles, calculated from the employee's home or duty station, whichever is less, to the final travel destination. An optional commute may be chosen by the NCCOB employee if the final travel destination is greater than 35 miles but no more than 75 miles from their duty station. Travel time will be allowed one round trip per week and only mileage will be reimbursed. Due to safety concerns with long commutes while in travel status, all trips greater than 75 miles from your duty station should include an overnight stay unless otherwise specifically approved by your supervisor. "Duty station" is defined as the location where the employee is assigned. The designation of an employee's home as their duty station requires the approval of the Commissioner of Banks or their designee.

Each employee is responsible for his or her own request for reimbursement. Specific dates of lodging must be listed on the reimbursement request, which shall be substantiated by a receipt from a commercial lodging establishment.

**Excess Lodging:** NCCOB may grant excess lodging reimbursements above the allowable GSA rate with prior approval. Excess lodging authorization for in-state, out-of-state, and out-of-country travel must be obtained **in advance** from the Commissioner of Banks or their designee. Excess lodging authorization is not allowed for reasons of convenience or personal preference for the employee.

**Third-Party Lodging:** Reimbursement for lodging in an establishment that is being rented out by a third party, or an establishment treated as an apartment building by state or local law or regulation, is allowed only if the NCCOB can document that per day lodging rates will cost less than the GSA approved in-state or out-of-state lodging rates. NCCOB approved third party lodging requests and payments must include documentation contained in travel or accounts payable records that provide evidence of savings to NCCOB. Third party lodging agreements are not allowed among family members or where such agreements or payments create a financial conflict of interest to the traveling employee or other NCCOB managers or employees. Third-party lodging may include, but is not limited to, online website house or room rental services.

In each case where third-party lodging is being considered, the employee must provide the NCCOB budget office with the following details regarding the arrangement:

1. The amount to be charged
2. The length of stay
3. Projected cost savings compared to applicable GSA lodging rates
4. Contact information

To receive reimbursement, the employee must submit documentation of the NCCOB budget office's approval as well as a signed rental agreement, or a reservation and receipt.

**Penalties and Charges Resulting from Cancellations:** Penalties and charges resulting from the cancellation of travel reservations (including airline, hotel, or other travel reservations and conference registrations) shall be the NCCOB's obligation if the employee's travel has been approved in advance and the cancellation or change is made at the direction of and/or for the convenience of the NCCOB.

If the cancellation or change is made for the personal benefit of the employee, it shall be the employee's obligation to pay the penalties and charges. However, in the event of accidents, serious illness, or death within the employee's immediate family or other critical circumstances beyond the control of the employee, the NCCOB may pay the penalties and charges.

**Meals During Overnight Travel:** A NCCOB employee will be reimbursed for meals, including lunches, while on official state business when the employee is in overnight travel status. Employees will be reimbursed for meals for partial days of travel when in overnight travel status and the partial day is the day of departure or the day of return. The following applies:

- Breakfast: depart duty station prior to 6:00 am.
- Lunch: depart duty station prior to Noon (day of departure) or return to duty station after 2:00 p.m. (day of return).
- Dinner: depart duty station prior to 5:00 p.m. (day of departure) or return to duty station after 8:00 p.m. (day of return).
- The travel must involve a travel destination located at least 35 miles from the employee's regularly assigned duty station or home, whichever is less.

**Meals During Daily Travel:** NCCOB employees who are not in overnight travel status cannot be reimbursed for meals.

**Meals and Day-to-Day Activities:** An exception to meals during overnight travel will occur if NCCOB employees are reimbursed for meals in conjunction with a congress, conference, assembly, convocation, meeting, or by whatever name called, of employees within a single state agency or institution or between the employees of two or more state agencies or institutions, to discuss issues relating to the

employee's normal day-to-day business activities. This exception occurs when NCCOB performs agency training where only NCCOB staff attend to discuss issues relating to day-to-day business activities. This would prevent lunch being claimed but has not been interpreted to prevent dinner and breakfast from being claimed because of overnight travel status.

**Meals for Required Employee Attendance:** A NCCOB employee may be reimbursed for meals, including lunches, when the employee's job requires his/her attendance at the meeting of a board, commission, committee, or council in his/her official capacity and the meal is preplanned as part of the meeting for the entire board, commission, committee, or council. Such board, commission, committee, or council meetings must include persons other than the employees of a single state agency or institution.

**Reimbursement for Meals:** Each NCCOB employee is responsible for his or her own request for meal reimbursement in NCCOB Online in compliance with the GSA established subsistence rates approved for each location. The zip code related to each day's meal allowance can be entered into NCCOB Online to populate the correct subsistence rates. Tips for meals are included in the meal allowance. Each meal reimbursement rate must be listed on the reimbursement request. Departure and arrival times must also be listed on the reimbursement request. The costs of meals included in other related activities (registration fees, conference costs, hotel registration, etc.) may not be duplicated in reimbursement requests. An employee may be reimbursed, if requested, for breakfast even if their lodging establishment offers a free continental breakfast. NCCOB may claim meal reimbursement even though meals are shown and offered as part of the flight schedule on a commercial airline.

**Excess Meals:** No excess reimbursement will be allowed for meals unless there are predetermined charges, or the meals were for out-of-country travel. The Commissioner of Banks or their designee may grant excess subsistence for meals for out-of-country travel.

**Convention Registration:** State law allows reimbursement of the actual amount of convention registration fees as shown by a valid receipt or invoice.

**Transportation by Personal Vehicle:** It is the intent of the NCCOB that employee travel shall be conducted in the most efficient manner and at the lowest and most reasonable cost to the agency. NCCOB passenger vehicle transportation and mileage reimbursement policy for in-state and out-of-state travel, including day and overnight trips, continues to promote efficient travel, with ride-sharing when possible.

NCCOB expects staff to use their personal vehicle when traveling on examinations or other regulatory business matters for confidentiality purposes and actual mileage is reimbursable. Mileage is measured from the duty station or point of departure—whichever is closer to the destination—to the destination (and return). In accordance

with the NCCOB's policies, employees shall be reimbursed at a rate that does not exceed the business standard mileage rate set by the Internal Revenue Service (**56 cents per mile effective January 1, 2021**) when using their personal vehicle for NCCOB business. Vicinity miles may be claimed but may not exceed 20 miles per day.

NCCOB employees will be required to provide proof that he/she holds a valid North Carolina driver's license to operate vehicles on agency business and must carry adequate liability insurance as required by state law. Each employee is cautioned that they may have personal liability driving his/her own vehicle on agency business and, therefore, should be adequately insured for his/her own financial protection.

Any accident occurring while on NCCOB business must be reported immediately to your supervisor and Human Resources. A copy of the traffic accident report may be requested, and it is the employee's responsibility to obtain it promptly. Additional forms will be required to be submitted if you are injured in the accident, so please follow up with Human Resources immediately after an accident occurs.

**Transportation by a Rental Vehicle:** If using a rental vehicle for out-of-state travel, employees shall use the State's term contracts when available. The State contract should be utilized at all Enterprise or Hertz locations for airport travel in the US.

- Hertz – Reference Customer Discount Program (CDP) Number 2086910. Please use this number when making reservations.
- Enterprise/National – Reference Account Number XZ53666. Please use this number when making reservations and paying with a credit card.

Unless prior approval has been obtained from the agency head or their designee, the state employee shall bear the difference in cost when renting a vehicle from a class that exceeds the cost of a standard vehicle on the State's term contract for short-term vehicle rentals. No reimbursement will be made for rental insurance purchased because state employees are covered under the State's auto insurance program. However, reimbursement for automobile rental insurance will be permitted for individuals engaged in state business during travel to international destinations.

**Non-state Employee Riders:** Non-state employees may accompany NCCOB employees when they have a business interest in the purpose of the trip and their presence is related to state business.

**Commuting:** No reimbursement shall be made for the use of a personal vehicle in commuting from a NCCOB employee's home to his or her duty station.

**Parking, Tolls, Fees, and Fines:** Parking fees, tolls, and storage fees are reimbursable while in the course of conducting official NCCOB business as long as such expenses are determined reasonable and clearly show that there was care



taken to keep the costs to the agency as low as possible. Receipts are required for reimbursement of these expenses. Hourly lots should only be used for parking not more than 24 hours. Daily or satellite lots should be used for periods of greater than 24 hours. Employees may also park at Fast Park and Relax which is at the intersection of Hwy. 70 and Lumley Road. (click on the link <https://www.thefastpark.com/airport-parking/raleigh-durham-rdu>) and begin receiving all the amenities and service offered by this company. Parking/auto related tips and gratuity are permissible.

Fines for traffic and parking violations are the responsibility of the NCCOB employee. The Commissioner of Banks may grant internal agency exceptions to this policy if an employee has a unique clearly documented business need that is not directly addressed by this policy. These exceptions are public records and shall be made available upon request by the public, OSBM staff, auditors, or interested third parties.

Gratuity: Reimbursable gratuity or tips must be considered reasonable for items that are not already covered under subsistence. Excessive tips will not be reimbursed. A reasonable tip would be one that a prudent person would give if traveling or conducting personal business and expending personal funds. Gratuity or tips should be listed under “other expenses” on the reimbursement request form. For further guidance, the following information is provided when calculating a tip:

- Airports – Baggage handling/skycaps = no more than \$2 per bag
- Shuttle Drivers and hotel staff: No more than \$2 per bag
- Parking attendant/auto valet: No more than \$2 per car
- Taxi Driver: no more than \$5 per trip and \$2 per bag

**Transportation by Common Carrier:** Reimbursement for air, rail, or bus fare is limited to actual coach fare, substantiated by a receipt. Reimbursement for fees for check-in, seat assignments, and baggage is limited to actual costs substantiated by a receipt. TSA Pre-Check expenses are for the employee’s convenience and are not reimbursable.

**Super Saver Rates:** When traveling by common carrier to conduct official NCCOB business, employees traveling to their destination earlier than necessary and/or delaying their return to avail the state of reduced transportation rates may be reimbursed subsistence for additional travel days if, in the opinion of the agency, the amount saved due to the early and/or delayed travel is greater than the amount expended in additional subsistence.

For example, when the reduced airfare rates require staying overnight one Saturday night, to be eligible for reimbursement, the NCCOB employee must stay overnight on the Saturday closest to the first or last day of official state business to which the employee is attending.

With sufficient justification, the NCCOB must make this exception prior to travel commencing.

**Travel Arrangement Fees and Service Charges:** With sufficient justification and documentation, and with approval of the BDA, employees can be reimbursed for usual, customary, and reasonable fees and service charges imposed by travel agents or third-party travel sites for assistance in making travel arrangements.

Contact Information for NCCOB Travel Arrangements:

Travel Management Partners

Web Address: <http://www.tmptravel.com/default.aspx#home>

Phone: 919-747-6104; 855-610-9370

Email: [NCCOB@tmptravel.com](mailto:NCCOB@tmptravel.com)

**Travel to/from Airport or Car Rental at Employee's Duty Station:**

Reimbursement for travel between the employee's duty station or home (whichever is less) and the nearest airline terminal, train/bus station, or car rental provider may be made under the following circumstances. For travel by:

- Taxi, car service, mobile phone ordered car service, or Airport Shuttle - actual costs with receipts.
- Private Car - the business standard mileage rate set by the Internal Revenue Services for a maximum of two round trips with no parking charge, or for one round trip with parking charges. Receipts are required for parking claims.
- Use of Public Transportation – In lieu of using a taxi or airport shuttle, employees can be reimbursed without receipts \$5.00 for each one-way trip either from the airport to the hotel/meeting or from the hotel/meeting to the airport, or the actual cost of the travel with the submission of receipts.

**Travel to/from Airport at Employee's Destination:** Reimbursement for travel to and from the airline terminal (or train/bus station if applicable) at the employee's destination may be made where travel is via most economical mode available as listed below:

- Taxi, car service, mobile phone ordered car service, or Airport Shuttle service – actual costs with receipts.
- Rental Vehicles - may be used with the prior approval of the agency head or their designee (receipt required).
- Use of Public Transportation – In lieu of using a taxi or airport shuttle, employees can be reimbursed without receipts \$5.00 for each one-way trip either from the airport to the hotel/meeting or from the hotel/meeting to the airport, or the actual cost of the travel with the submission of receipts.

**Travel Involving Trips Other than to and from the Airport:** The actual costs of taxi and shuttle service fares are reimbursable when required for travel on official

NCCOB business. The request must be documented with a receipt. The use of public transportation is reimbursable for actual costs with a receipt.

**Authorization for Out-of-Country Travel:** All out-of-country travel must be authorized by the Commissioner of Banks or his/her designee.

Out-of-country travel status begins when the employee leaves the country and remains in effect until the employee returns to the country. If the employee and other qualified official travelers use hotel and meal facilities located outside North Carolina, but within the continental United States, immediately prior to and upon returning from out-of-country travel but during the same travel period, out-of-state subsistence rates shall apply.

**Passports:** Reimbursement for costs incurred in obtaining or renewing a passport may be made to a NCCOB employee who, in the regular course of his or her duties, is required to travel out of country in the furtherance of official state business.

### **Travel Policies for Members of State Banking Commission**

**Stipend:** Members of the State Banking Commission (SBC) are authorized to receive **\$15 per day stipend** or per diem compensation for their official service. State employees and members of all state boards, commissions, and councils whose salaries or any portion of whose salaries are paid from state funds shall receive no per diem compensation in addition to their salaries or hourly pay rates.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) audit responses issued in 2016 and 2017 have for certain boards concluded that these stipends or per diem compensation payments should be treated as employee compensation for purposes of federal and state withholding tax and FICA tax. The Office of State Controller (OSC) has established payroll system payment mechanisms to ensure withholding and FICA tax deductions are deducted from applicable member stipend or compensation payments.

**Meals and Refreshments:** Meals may be provided and reimbursed only if preplanned as part of the meeting for the entire SBC while on official state business.

Meals that are provided to the entire SBC may include required staff who, in the regular course of their duties, are expected to attend the meeting and any other employee whose presence is necessary to accomplish a purpose of the meeting.

Refreshments (e.g., coffee, soft drinks, cookies, doughnuts) may be served at official SBC meetings. Reimbursement may be paid from NCCOB funds for the actual cost not to exceed **\$5.00 per member** and required staff, per meeting per day. "Required Staff" shall be defined as an employee who, in the regular course of his or her duties, is expected to attend the meeting and any other employee whose presence is necessary to accomplish a purpose of the meeting.