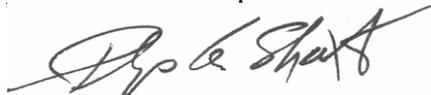


For: FSA Employees

**Requesting Approval of Actual Subsistence for Lodging Using GovTrip**

**Approved by:** Acting Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

The Department revised the Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR) and made a significant change to actual expense approvals. The revised ATR requires Agency Administrators to approve actual subsistence expenses up to 149 percent of per diem, and all requests of 150 percent or greater must be approved by the USDA Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The Department has indicated that using actual expenses **must** be sharply curtailed by USDA travelers.

**B Purpose**

This notice provides FSA employees the following:

- FSA actual subsistence policy for lodging
- instructions on requesting actual subsistence using GovTrip
- example of a justification memorandum requesting approval of actual subsistence for:
  - National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, and APFO (Exhibit 1)
  - State and County Offices (Exhibit 2).

<p><b>Disposal Date</b></p> <p>January 1, 2011</p>	<p><b>Distribution</b></p> <p>All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
--	--

## Notice FI-2939

### 2 Actual Subsistence Policy

#### A Policy

The following subparagraphs apply to **all** FSA travelers regardless of the funding source of the official travel. Any FSA employee travel financed by other Federal agencies, soft funds, or non-Federal sources, does **not** provide exemption from the travel policies.

**All** requests for actual subsistence **must** be submitted in writing using either Exhibit 1 (National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, and APFO) or Exhibit 2 (State and County Offices).

Actual subsistence requests that do not meet the FSA actual subsistence policy will be returned to the traveler through their supervisor without action.

Post-approval will be granted only in rare, extenuating circumstances. FSA travelers **shall** discontinue the practice of routinely seeking post-approval for actual expense travel costs.

#### B Requesting Up to 149 Percent of Per Diem

Requests up to 149 percent of per diem will **only** be approved if there is no lodging at the per diem rate at the temporary duty (TDY) site. All requests for actual expenses must be submitted in writing and approved before initiating travel. Failure to obtain advance approval may result in employees paying costs over per diem out of pocket. When attending a conference, employees must seek alternative lodging if the conference hotel exceeds the per diem rate. If selecting a hotel at the per diem rate will result in excessive transportation expenses to and from the TDY site, the employee may provide a cost comparison that justifies use of actual expenses. See Exhibits 1 and 2 for examples of justification memoranda requesting approval of actual subsistence.

**Important:** Per diem is the allowance for lodging **excluding** taxes.

#### C Requesting 150 Percent or More of Per Diem

As a general rule, FSA will no longer submit actual expenses requests of 150 percent or more to the Department. Employees **must** find alternative lodging within the per diem rate. If no hotel is available within the per diem rate, a hotel should be selected that does not exceed 149 percent of per diem and actual subsistence approval shall be sought **before** initiating travel. In extreme situations, such as medical, natural disasters, or critical/mission essential requirements, the Administrator will consider forwarding requests for 150 percent or more to OCFO.

**Important:** Per diem is the allowance for lodging **excluding** taxes.

## Notice FI-2939

### 3 Requesting Approval for Actual Subsistence

#### A Process for Requesting Approval for Actual Subsistence

Request approval for actual subsistence according to the following guidance.

- **All** requests for approval of actual subsistence **must** be submitted to the first line travel approving official in writing.
- National Office travelers must obtain approval of written request from their first line travel approving official **and** their Deputy Administrator. After the Deputy Administrator's approval, the approved written request shall be faxed into GovTrip.
- State and County Office travelers must obtain approval of written request from their first line travel approving official, SED, **and** DAFO. If SED approves the actual subsistence, SED shall sign by their name at the top of the memo, then the approved written request shall be faxed into GovTrip for DAFO approval.
- The traveler's approved written request will be reviewed for compliance with FSA's actual subsistence policy.
- Actual subsistence requests that conform to the established FSA actual subsistence policy will be stamped "ACTUALS APPROVED" for actual subsistence in GovTrip by the:
  - FSA Travel Staff for National Office travelers
  - DAFO staff for State and county travelers.
- The traveler's GovTrip electronic authorization will then be routed to the traveler's reviewer and/or approver to continue and complete the travel approval process.
- Actual subsistence requests that do not meet the FSA actual subsistence policy will be stamped "RETURNED" and electronically returned to the traveler in GovTrip
- Attached is a sample format (Exhibits 1 and 2) that can be used to request written actual subsistence approval.

#### B Labor-Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

**Notice FI-2939**

**3 Requesting Approval for Actual Subsistence (Continued)**

**C Contact**

If there are questions about this notice, contact the appropriate office as follows.

<b>Office</b>	<b>Contact</b>
County Offices	State Office Federal Agency Travel Administrator (FATA)
State Offices	
Kansas City and St. Louis complexes	Lois Dick by e-mail to <b>lois.dick@kcc.usda.gov</b>
State Office FATA, National Office, and APFO	FMD, Debt Management and Travel Policy Office by e-mail to <b>poc_travel@wdc.usda.gov</b>

**Example of Justification Memorandum Requesting Approval of Actual Subsistence for the National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, and APFO**

The following is an example of a justification memorandum requesting approval of actual subsistence for National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, and APFO.

  <p>United States Department of Agriculture</p> <p>Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services</p> <p>Farm Service Agency</p> <p>1400 Independence Washington, DC</p>	<p><b>TO:</b> Jonathan Coppess Administrator</p> <p><b>THRU:</b> William Willer DMTPO</p> <p><b>FROM:</b> Name Deputy Administrator of</p> <p><b>SUBJECT:</b> Request for Actual Subsistence Approval for Lodging Only</p>	<p><b>DATE:</b></p>
	<hr/> <p>Please accept this request for the approval of actual subsistence expense for lodging:</p>	
	Employee:	Employee's name
	Purpose of Travel:	Training
	Dates of Travel:	Enter travel dates
	TDY Location:	Somewhere, NC
	GSA Per Diem – Lodging Rate:	\$70.00
	Lowest Cost Available Lodging Within Reasonable Commuting Area:	\$97.95 per night (ie.140% of Government Rate)
	Reason for Request:	Employee invited to speak on short notice. No other rooms available within a reasonable distance.
	Contact Person: Telephone Number:	
<p><b>Required Signatures:</b></p> <p>Date _____ First Line Travel Approver _____ Approved ___ Denied ___</p> <p>Date _____ Deputy Administrator _____ Approved ___ Denied ___</p> <p>Next Step - Fax into GovTrip for final actual subsistence approval</p>		
<p>USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer</p>		

**Example of Justification Memorandum Requesting Approval of Actual Subsistence for State and County Offices**

The following is an example of a justification memorandum requesting approval of actual subsistence for a State or County Office.

  United States Department of Agriculture Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Farm Service Agency 1400 Independence Washington, DC	<b>TO:</b> Jonathan Coppess Administrator <b>THRU:</b> Karis Gutter DAFO <b>FROM:</b> SED's Name (Name of State) SED <b>SUBJECT:</b> Request for Actual Subsistence Approval for Lodging Only	<b>DATE:</b>
	Please accept this request for the approval of actual subsistence expense for lodging:	
Employee:	Employee's name	
Purpose of Travel:	Training	
Dates of Travel:	Enter travel dates	
TDY Location:	Somewhere, NC	
GSA Per Diem – Lodging Rate:	\$70.00	
Lowest Cost Available Lodging Within Reasonable Commuting Area:	\$97.95 per night (ie. 140% of Government Rate)	
Reason for Request:	Employee invited to speak on short notice. No other rooms available within a reasonable distance.	
Contact Person:		
Telephone Number:		
<b>Required Signatures:</b>		
Date _____		
First Line Travel Approver _____	Approved ___	Denied ___
Next Step - Fax into GovTrip for DAFO approval		
USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer		