



## Travel Frequently Asked Questions – TA Recipients

*Purpose.* This document is to provide or supplement guidance on the reimbursement of travel, subsistence, and related expenses of a Technical Assistance (TA) Award Recipient conducting business for cooperative agreements awarded under the Community Compass TA and Capacity Building Program NOFAs and the Distressed Cities TA NOFAs. Recipients should follow their travel policy; however, should the policy be unacceptable or fail to address grey areas, Recipients should refer to the guidance in this document. <sup>2 CFR 200.474(d)</sup>

Travel expenses must be reasonable and necessary, and travelers must use the most cost-effective means of travel. All travel reimbursements must meet the award terms and conditions, restrictions, and guidance issued by the TA Division (TAD) in the Office of Community Planning and Development, on behalf of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). While standard operating procedures cannot address every scenario, this document's purpose is to cover the most common travel-related situations. When unusual circumstances arise, TA Recipients should direct questions in writing to their *Government Technical Representative (GTR)* for clarification/approval before incurring an expense. GTRs are responsible for the enforcement and oversight and serve as a liaison on behalf of the *Cooperative Agreement Officer (CAO)*. This document reflects the guidance and regulations stated in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) and 2 CFR § 200.

Recipients must retain receipts for all travel-related expenses over \$75 <sup>FTR §301-52.4</sup>. TAD does not require receipts to be attached to the invoice at the time of billing; however, receipts should be made available at the request of the GTR. Should a special accommodation exception be required, Recipients must provide a written certification statement by a competent medical authority prior to each scheduled travel request. However, if the special need is a lifelong condition, then a one-time certification statement is required at the time of the award to be kept on file. Certification statements must include at a minimum:

- a. A written statement by a competent medical authority stating that special accommodation is necessary.
- b. An approximate duration of the special accommodation.
- c. A recommendation as to the suitable class of transportation accommodations based on the disability.

TAD understands that Travel calculations are estimations; however, Recipients should estimate as accurately as possible. When estimating travel costs for work plans:

- Reference previous work plan travel during similar time frames and expenses.
  - Use public travel sites such as Kayak, Expedia, and Google to estimate transportation expenses.
  - <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> or <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/perdiemCalc.cfm> for per diem rates.
- Resources to assist when billing for travel costs:
- Travel Exception Form
  - [GSA FAQs](#)

	Possible Gray Area(s)	TAD's Response	Is Prior Approval Required?	Examples for Justification or Reporting
<b>Transportation</b>				
<b>Air Travel</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When booking air travel, can I book airfare before HUD approves tasking?</li> <li>2. Can I upgrade my seat? *FTR §301-10.123</li> <li>3. Can I use my Frequent Flyer program? *FTR §301-10.124</li> <li>4. Can I book two one-way tickets instead of a round trip ticket?</li> <li>5. What should I do if, during travel, I have to change, cancel or edit my travel?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TAD does not encourage Recipients to incur any costs before receiving official HUD-approved tasking. Should a Recipient incur costs prior to HUD's approval, the Recipient is responsible for costs should HUD alter planned tasking.</li> <li>2. Should travelers use an upgrade from coach-class accommodations, they do so at their own expense.</li> <li>3. Should travelers use personal airline club status to upgrade coach-class accommodations, they do so at their own expense.</li> <li>4. TA Recipients should schedule travel that is the usual and most direct and cost-effective route. If direct routes are not available or less advantageous to the assignment, TA Recipients must seek written approval from their designated GTR. TA Recipients should provide a comparison of the round-trip ticket cost. *FTR§301-10.7</li> <li>5. Recipients should alert GTR as soon as possible, as prior approval is need. If approval is granted, Recipients should make arrangements that are the most cost effective.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recipients should make the GTR aware of advance purchase if incurring costs before HUD-approved tasking.</li> <li>2. Only if special accommodations are required.</li> <li>3. No.</li> <li>4. Yes, cost comparison should be completed to justify the cost.</li> <li>5. Yes, prior approval is required to change, edit, or cancel travel while traveling.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Recipient purchased refundable tickets before HUD-approved tasking so that costs incurred would be the cheapest airfare.</li> <li>2. The traveler has a documented medical condition and needs the extra legroom.</li> <li>3. No justification is required if no cost is incurred.</li> <li>4. The Recipient was able to book two one-way tickets to Houston, TX. The total cost was \$175 less than the round-trip option. Recipient was given approval from GTR.</li> <li>5. Recipients may face instances where weather or an emergency is cause to change, edit, or cancel travel.</li> </ol>
<b>Train</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is the Acela train allowable? *FTR §301-10.164</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recipients may use extra-fare train service if HUD determines it is more advantageous to the Government or is required for security reasons. Extra-fare train service is considered to be a class above the lowest class offered on any particular train</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes, using the Acela train is normally unallowable and requires approval from GTR.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Recipient is asked to attend a training or meeting with short notice, and there are no non-extra-fare trains available, and the alternative transportation is more expensive.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Rental Car</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When is it reasonable to use a rental vehicle? * FTR§301-10.450</li> <li>2. What type of rental vehicle is allowable? * FTR§301-10.450</li> <li>3. Can we purchase rental insurance? *FTR §301-10.451-452</li> <li>4. Can I use my rental car to transport others, specifically federal officials or can I allow a federal official to drive my rental vehicle?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The GTR will determine if a rental vehicle is reasonable. Instances that allow for a rental car vehicle include safety, traveling as a large group and sharing ground transportation, transporting materials, or no other rental vehicle type is available. If a Recipient can provide justification that a rental car is cheaper than other types of transportation, e.g. Uber or cab, then the rental vehicle is allowable.</li> <li>2. Recipients should always default to an economy rental vehicle. GTR will determine if the rental vehicle is reasonable. Instances that allow for a non-economy rental vehicle include safety, traveling as a large group and sharing ground transportation, transporting materials, or no other rental vehicle type is available.</li> <li>3. For Recipients who are traveling in the Continental United States (CONUS), rental insurance is an unallowable expense. Recipients who are traveling outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) are allowed to incur rental insurance costs. It is recommended that Recipients use a vendor that participates in the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement.</li> <li>4. No, rental vehicles should be operated by the employee who signs the rental agreement and used to transport the Recipient's staff and equipment only.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No, GTR will determine reasonableness and if determined unreasonable reimbursement is not guaranteed.</li> <li>2. No, Recipients should be aware that TAD will determine reasonableness, and Recipients are responsible for the cost if it is determined unreasonable.</li> <li>3. No.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recipients should provide reasoning on why rental car cost was incurred.</li> <li>2. Recipients should provide justification why a non-economy rental car cost was incurred.</li> <li>3. Recipients can only purchase rental insurance while traveling OCONUS.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Uber/Lyft/taxi</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is tipping a taxi or Uber reimbursable? *FTR§301-10.421</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes, tipping is an allowable expense under the FTR; however, it is up to the GTR to determine reasonableness. It is the suggestion of TAD that tips should be no more than 15% of the fare. Please have a receipt on file for reference should a GTR require clarification or justification.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recipients must include tip amount separate from taxi charge in the travel break down. GTR will determine reasonableness. Recipients should have a receipt on file should GTR require it.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Lodging</b></p>	<p>1. Can I upgrade my room over the government rate if I only charge HUD the per diem rate? 2. What do I do if the hotel I want to stay at does not have the government rate available?</p>	<p>1. As long as the Recipient is billing HUD for the Government per diem and the cost of the accommodation is no more than the Government per diem per night, it is allowable. Recipients will be responsible for additional costs incurred above per diem. 2. GTRs suggest that Recipients use the Lodging Exception form. GTR's have the authority to approve once a justification is received.</p>	<p>1. No, Recipients can provide justification at the time of billing. 2. Yes, Recipients must obtain approval from GTR before incurring costs.</p>	<p>1. Recipients get a suite but only charge HUD for Government per diem and assume the additional costs. 2. Recipients must have prior approval from GTR before incurring costs. Incurring costs without approval will be unallowable.</p>
<p><b>Multiples Occupants</b></p>	<p>1. How do I invoice multiple occupants in the same room under the government rate? <small>*FTR §301-11.13</small></p>	<p>1. Your reimbursement is limited to one-half of the double occupancy rate if the person sharing the room is another Government employee on official travel.</p>	<p>1. No.</p>	<p>1. Recipients must break down lodging expense by person and make the GTR aware that the room was split.</p>
<p><b>Airbnb</b></p>	<p>1. Can I stay in an Airbnb? <small>*FTR§301-11.12</small></p>	<p>1. Generally, no. Airbnb is considered “non-conventional lodging” and can only be used when no other “conventional lodging” is available.</p>	<p>1. Exceptions must be approved/authorized by the Recipient’s GTR prior to scheduling.</p>	<p>1. The Recipient was unable to find hotel accommodation due to convention in town. Airbnb was the only option. Approval was obtained from GTR before incurring costs.</p>
<p><b>Long-Term Rentals</b></p>	<p>1. Can I book a long-term accommodation if I know I will have to keep going to the same Tour of duty station (TDY)? <small>*FTR§301-11.14-15</small></p>	<p>1. Yes, provided the cost does not exceed the daily rate of conventional lodging. When scheduling long-term basis lodging (e.g., weekly or monthly), the daily lodging rate is computed by dividing the total lodging cost by the number of days of occupancy for which you are entitled to per diem.</p>	<p>1. Yes, long term rental should be approved by GTR prior to incurring costs.</p>	<p>1. The Recipient found an extended stay hotel that can be booked consecutively at the government rate.</p>
<p><b>Per Diem</b></p>	<p>1. I am traveling a short distance to a meeting. Am I able to use per diem for meal costs? <small>*FTR§301-11.1-2</small></p>	<p>1. Recipients are allowed to bill per diem if travel is more than 12 hours from their duty station. Anything less than 12 hours is not reimbursable.</p>	<p>1. No.</p>	<p>1. Recipients must document that travel was more than 12 hours to bill per diem.</p>