Cost Comparison Requirements

WHEN SHOULD A COST COMPARISON BE OBTAINED?

Comparison should be obtained at the time the ticket is purchased.

WHAT DOCUMENTATION CAN BE USED AS A QUOTE/COST COMPARISON?

A. Printouts from online vendors, i.e., Expedia and Orbitz - obtained prior to the trip

1. Acceptable cost comparison printouts should be the first page of search results to the business destination for dates and times needed to complete the business mission. Some websites may show the search results on the left side of the page. In this case, please print the first two pages to be sure entire search range is provided.

2. A cost comparison is a comparison of all available flights and airlines generally with one stopover.

B. Copy of a co-worker’s airfare itinerary/receipt that attended the same business event and traveled to business destination and returned with no personal or other travel destinations involved.

C. A written statement from a travel agency obtained prior to the trip

WHAT QUALIFIES AS COMPARISON 'PRIOR' TO TRAVEL:

Comparison must show the lowest available commercial coach airfare for one individual traveling to and from the business destination for the days of business only. Remember only print out the first page of the search results. See A. 1. Under ‘What Documentation can be Used as a Quote/Cost Comparison?’.

- Comparisons should not be limited to only one airline, such as preferred carrier or reward program carrier.

- Comparisons are only accurate if obtained prior to travel.

- One-way tickets should not be used as a cost comparison.

WHEN IS A COST COMPARISON REQUIRED

Any cost comparisons should be made prior to the trip and for the same dates as the actual business trip. The amount that is reimbursed is the lesser of the cost comparison or actual expense amount.

A. Driving VS Flying:

- The mileage reimbursement cannot exceed the best available airfare prior to travel. The comparison must show the lowest available commercial coach airfare for one individual traveling to and from the business destination for the days of business. To qualify for reimbursement when driving longer distances (Rule of Thumb: Greater than 800 miles roundtrip) normally accomplished by flying, the expense under the “Drive vs Fly” rule must be the lesser of the actual mileage expense or total of:
• Lowest available coach airfare prior to travel for dates of business only
• Roundtrip mileage to airport
• Airport parking (ICT – rate of $9.00 per day)
• Shuttle expense to/from airport to business location

B. When leaving from a location other than 'Official Station' or place of business:
• Travel expense reimbursement is limited to the lesser of expenses incurred from the departure point or from the "official station". The official station is defined as the location of the permanent office.
• If the traveler is departing from some place other than their permanent office, a comparison/quote obtained prior to travel must be attached indicating expenses are the lesser of the two.
• If two adjoining trips are made for University business with no personal travel included, a cost comparison is not required even though the traveler is departing from a location other than the official station to go to the second University business location.
• When a traveler returns from a location other than the business location, a comparison must be provided.

C. Discounted Fare Due to Additional Overnight Stay (generally a Saturday Night):
• Discount air travel arrangements that require an additional night(s) lodging and/or subsistence are reimbursable under the following conditions:
  • Additional lodging and subsistence must not exceed regular economy/coach fare at the time the trip is taken.
  • The comparison should include a quote for coach fare (prior to travel) without the additional stay, amount of discounted fare, additional lodging, subsistence, rental car days, airport parking, and any other expenses incurred on behalf of the extra day(s) stay.
  • The total of the discounted fare, days of additional lodging, subsistence, rental car, airport parking, and any other expenses incurred because of additional stay should be less than quote without additional stay.

D. When Combining Personal and Business Travel:
• Occasionally an employee may take a trip that includes both personal and business travel.
• When this occurs, the following rules apply.
  • If the stay at a business location is extended (no more than 2-3 days) either prior to or after the business mission, the entire ticket may be reimbursed. Any extension longer than 2-3 days (prior to or after end of business) requires a cost comparison for the direct route to and from the business location for the days of business. Additional expenses, i.e., parking, lodging, per diem, etc., will not be reimbursed for personal days added.
  • If any other destinations (other than normal connecting airports) not pertaining to the business purpose are included on the ticket, the amount reimbursed will be the fare directly related to the point(s) of business based on the fare class used. The traveler
must provide a cost comparison for the direct route to and from the business location for the days of business. This must be obtained ‘PRIOR’ to travel and submitted with Travel Reimbursement report receipts.

- Airfare reimbursement will not be made for non-university business travel even though the total discounted airfare is less than regular coach fare.

- A combination trip does benefit the traveler to some extent, therefore, travelers should exercise special care not to seek reimbursement for expenses that could be construed as personal.

E. **When Using Leased or Chartered Aircraft:**

- The actual lease cost for aircraft leased from a commercial leasing company is reimbursable up to the round trip commercial coach airfare rate for the same trip for the same number of official passengers.

- Chartered aircraft expenses are reimbursable up to the lowest available round trip commercial coach airfare for the same dates and destination of travel.

- In each of the situations above, a traveler must provide a written quote ‘PRIOR’ to travel. The quote may be from a travel agency, airline or printout of an online quote.

F. **When Using A Train to Travel in a Foreign Country:**

- A foreign train, bus or other service carrier may be used in lieu of, or as a supplement to air travel at the lowest rate by the transportation facility used. However, if such travel could have been performed by air, the allowance will not normally exceed that of coach air accommodations.