



Travel Protocol

Travel funding is part of the State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) budget, but these funds must be used judiciously and spread throughout the year to ensure that there are enough to cover all critical travel needs.

Before planning an onsite visit, staff need to consider whether a conference call or other mode of technical assistance (TA) delivery can satisfy the objectives. If an in-person meeting is needed, staff should carefully consider who needs to travel to the meeting. When travel is deemed necessary, staff are expected to be, first and foremost, cost conscious in their choice of arrangements.

There may be special circumstances whereby complying with the travel guidance outlined in this document will result in serious hardship to the traveler or an inability to carry out a priority contract activity in support of the Office of Child Care (OCC) or the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). If so, please discuss these circumstances with the SCBC Project Director well in advance.

OCC project staff travel must conform to the specifications of ICF's contract with OCC as well as the General Services Administration (GSA) policy and other applicable policies. Specific business units or projects within ICF may at their discretion impose greater control than required by the ICF policy, but not less.

Staff are to use GSA hotel rates as a guide when booking rooms. As consultants, ICF employees are not eligible for the government hotel rate offered by most hotels. Staff may request this rate, but not all hotels will honor it without government identification. When the government rate cannot be obtained, staff are encouraged to search for lodging with a cost that is as close to the federal rate as possible. Staff should also consider transportation costs when selecting a lodging location.

Schedule and Cost Guidelines

SCBC expects travel arrangements to be made at least 14 days in advance so the best prices and scheduling on airline tickets can be obtained. If the cost of an airline ticket exceeds \$500, staff must get approval from the SCBC Project Director before proceeding. In addition, for any flight exceeding \$600, the contracting officer representative (COR) will evaluate the charge to ensure that it is appropriate and can be paid for with contract funds. This is not to imply that any flight expense greater than \$600 will not be acceptable; however, staff must be sensitive to the expense and prepared to justify it. If all the following statements and questions can be answered with "yes," then the expense is likely justifiable.

- ◆ The flight in question is being booked at least 14 days in advance (and preferably 30 days).
- ◆ At the time of booking, no other flight exists for the destination that will result in lower cost for the travel, **or**
At the time of booking, other less expensive flights exist, but they all include more than one stop, resulting in an unreasonable total travel time for the distance traveled (this criterion can be subjective; consider loss of productivity and length and number of layovers, and be objective in what a reasonable person would consider too much of an inconvenience).
- ◆ Departing a day earlier or staying a day later would not reduce the cost of the flight enough to offset the additional hotel and meal per diem costs.



If a flight cost exceeds \$500, please notify the SCBC Project Director before booking the flight and provide supporting justification in an email with screen shots from the online travel service that show alternative flight costs and any other narrative that may be necessary to justify the expense. With this information, the Project Director can notify the COR in advance and answer any potential questions.

When traveling with federal funds, OCC projects are held to the same requirements and restrictions as federal staff, and travel is evaluated accordingly.

Booking

Staff are strongly encouraged to use the ICF travel service to book travel (<https://travel.icfi.com/>). Staff can call a travel agent or book online. The online booking feature allows staff to set up a profile in order to identify and save information about memberships (e.g., AAA), reward programs, credit card numbers, travel documents (passport numbers, etc.), and other travel preferences. The ICF travel service also offers the option of billing airfare charges directly to ICF with an accompanying charge code. This reduces out-of-pocket costs to ICF staff.

If the ICF travel service is not used, any other travel service is acceptable.

Travel Approval

Travel approval is the responsibility of the SCBC Project Director and the COR. Travel is typically identified through the TA planning process. SCBC staff provide detailed information to the SCBC Project Director to demonstrate how onsite TA will help Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) grantees make progress toward state and OCC goals. ACF Regional Program Managers and CCDF grantees are not responsible for requesting travel approval from the OCC central office.

If the TA request that includes travel is part of the ACF regional TA plan approved by the OCC central office, no further approval is necessary. Approval from the central office covers the TA event and the associated travel. If a travel request is not part of the approved ACF regional TA plan, SCBC staff must take the following steps:

- ◆ Confirm with the SCBC Project Director that sufficient travel funds are available.
- ◆ Discuss the travel request with the ACF Regional Office to obtain agreement on the request and the goals and outcomes of the visit.
- ◆ Send an email to the SCBC Project Director, with a copy to ACF Regional Office staff, summarizing the TA request, goals of the onsite visit, and expected outcomes.

On occasion, groups who have invited OCC project staff to present have also offered to cover their travel expenses. These arrangements must be discussed with and approved by the SCBC Project Director to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest.

Travel Budgeting

The SCBC Project Director will work with OCC staff to ensure that travel funds are used in the most effective and equitable manner for the benefit of CCDF grantees.

A travel budget will be maintained and made accessible to all SCBC staff to record past and upcoming travel. Each staff member and ACF Region will be allotted a travel fund at the beginning of the contract year. Staff members are responsible for managing their travel funds throughout the year to ensure that there is adequate funding for all required travel. If it appears that the allotted funds will not be sufficient, SCBC staff members must notify their supervisors as early in the contract year as possible.



As travel is anticipated, SCBC staff are required to go into the travel budget and enter a line item indicating the date of travel (or estimated timeframe), location, purpose, meeting name, and estimated cost. This amount will be used to project expenses throughout the year. As expense reports are submitted through the ICF system, the Operations Specialist will match the expense report with the entry on the travel budget and replace the estimated amount with the actual amount.

Recording Time While Traveling

Business travel related to OCC projects (regardless of mode of transportation) shall be recorded as work time when it's conducted during standard ICF business hours of 8 a.m.–5 p.m., regardless of the employee's activities during travel.

Travel outside standard business hours shall only be recorded if the employee is actively working while traveling. Actively working includes participating in conference calls, writing or reviewing project documents, developing deliverables (e.g., PowerPoint presentations), reading materials related to researching a deliverable, or responding to email or voicemail. Actively working does not include sleeping, driving, eating meals with colleagues, or reading professional materials not related to a specific request.

The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

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