



Policy Statement

This Policy establishes guidelines for official travel undertaken by Public Sector employers and employees in their official capacity, as representatives of the Cook Islands Government. In particular, it streamlines reimbursement procedures for travellers, it helps avoid fraud and protects officials through clearly outlined safety procedures.

Scope

This Policy covers domestic and international travel undertaken by employees of the Cook Islands Public Sector in their official capacity, as representatives of the Government.

Principles

The Public Service Act 2009 identifies the following values for public servants to adhere to:

Honesty	acting honestly, being truthful, and abiding by the laws of the Cook Islands
Impartiality	providing impartial advice, acting without fear or favour, and making decisions on their merits
Service	serving the people well through faithful service to the Government of the Cook Islands
Respect	treating the people, the Government of the Cook Islands and colleagues with courtesy and respect
Transparency	taking actions and making decisions in an open and transparent manner
Accountability	being able to explain the reason for actions taken and taking responsibility for those actions
Efficiency and effectiveness	achieving good results for the Cook Islands in an economical way

The duty to act as a good employer requires employers to develop and implement personnel policies which ensure the fair and proper treatment of employees during employment, including the impartial recruitment of employees, employee capability development opportunities and good and safe working conditions.

All international and domestic travel by Officials must reflect the prudent use of Government and/or donor funding; they should be transparent, legitimate and able to withstand scrutiny.

Legislation and Regulations

Public Service Act 2009 (Amendments 2016) and other relevant legislation.

Definitions

Agency means any public service department, instrument, or agent of the Government and includes a body corporate or organisation that is wholly owned or controlled by the Crown

Employee means any person who is an employee of the Public Sector

Employer means the Public Service Commissioner, Head of a Public Sector Agency, Manager or their delegated authority

Official/s means any employee of the Public Sector that carries out the business of Government domestically or internationally.

Official travel involves carrying out business on behalf of Government including training, conferences, seminars and other relevant work of the Public Service

Public Sector includes Public Service Departments, Crown Agencies, Island Governments, State Owned Enterprises and Ministerial Support Offices

Public Service Commissioner means the Public Service Commissioner appointed under Article 73 of the Constitution and Section 5 of the Public Service Act 2009

Procedures

Employers are responsible for administering this Policy. The employer is responsible for ensuring all policies are easily accessible to employees. Employees need to read, understand, familiarise and comply with this and any other relevant Government policies. Any person who breaches this Policy will be deemed to have committed an act of misconduct and may be subject to disciplinary action and/or dismissal.

Authorisation

All official travel, allowances and travel related matters must be approved by the employer prior to embarking on the travel. For the Head of Ministry (HOM), this includes seeking approval from the Minister. Where the HOM or an employee will be accompanying a Minister, they will also be responsible for preparing the Minister's Cabinet submission to travel, which should also note any expenditure from the Civil List.

Travel notification forms with required supporting documents must be submitted to the employer as soon as practically possible, no less than three days prior to travel.

Unauthorised official travel and amendments is prohibited. Any costs incurred from unauthorised travel will be borne by the official travelling.

Conditions

The employer must ensure there is sufficient funding to meet approved travel commitments.

Official travel must fall within the scope of the Agency's functions and travel absences must not disrupt the delivery of the Agency's outputs.

Those on official travel **must** respond to urgent emails or official communication whilst away, to minimise risks to the Agency.

Officials must be aware of the Government travel insurance scheme (Annex 4) administered by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) for International travel

All proposed travel must specify:

- The purpose of the travel – representation at training/meeting/conference/seminars etc.
- The official travel or engagement, supported by an invitation, programme or official notice
- Level of participation and any accompanying officials
- Duration of meeting and travel time
- Confirmation of funding - Cook Islands Government or Donor
- Details of additional leave taken in conjunction with official travel, including copies of any leave application via the automated electronic system (ESS)
- Benefits to the country – Ministry/Agency and NSDP goals
- Delegated authority during the Official's absence due to travel and the extent of that authority to approve spending, staff leave, etc.

Travelling in business or premium economy class is prohibited unless:

- Donor or Development partner approves funding to cover business or premium economy class travel
- The Official funds an upgrade at their own expense
- The Official has a special medical condition (with medical certificate) supporting travel in business or premium economy class

Officials must:

- Travel on the most direct and economical route/s using the best fares available
- Declare what Donor or Development partner funding will cover and provide relevant supporting documentation to justify claims for Government to fund official travel expense shortfalls prior to travel
- Provide receipts for any travel claims
- Fund extra days of approved leave for personal use, planned along with the official travel
- Fund authorised amendments to tickets, upgrades or lounge access (airport or airline)
- Declare any gift received in their official capacity to their employer
- Provide to their employer a copy of their itinerary as well as their contact details.

Officials in transit for more than five hours may stay in a day room at the most economical hotel near the airport or upgrade to a fare that will allow airline or airport lounge access - whichever is most economical to the Agency.

Allowances

Allowances are commonly referred to as Per Diems, it, generally covers accommodation, meals and incidental costs. Allowances do not need to be accounted for, unless the Official seeks reimbursement for expenses beyond the approved per diem rates.

Officials are not entitled to per diems from the Agency if travel allowances are funded by donor or development partners, unless the funding is insufficient to cover travel related expenses e.g. extended stay due to air/sea transportation issues.

However, officials are entitled to partial per diems from the Agency if travel allowances are partially funded by donor or development partners e.g. donor funding only covers accommodation, or if the funding is insufficient to cover travel related expenses.

International travel

- Employers can use the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) per diem rates obtained from the Office of the Public Service Commissioner as a guide in determining international per diems. Any deviation from rates must be explained in writing and retained on file for audit purposes. The per diems must be converted to New Zealand dollars using relevant exchange rates (local banks or reliable online sources) on the date of exchange.
- Accommodation costs must be economical and reasonable. Government funded accommodation is generally paid before the commencement of travel, which will reduce the amount of per diem payable to the official. Where actual accommodation costs are below accommodation rates, the Agency will pay the most economic and reasonable rate.
- In the situation where the country or jurisdiction is not covered under the PIFS per diem rates table, other official per diem rates such as the NZ Government (MFAT) rates could be used but must be approved by the Employer and within budget.

Domestic travel

- Employers can use current per diem rates obtained from the Office of the Public Service Commissioner as a guide in determining the minimum domestic travel per diems (Annex 3).

- Officials of technical or specialist capacity per diem rates may be determined in accordance to agency internal policies and approved by the Employer.
- Provision to deduct meal allowances may be permitted should arrangements such as catering be provided in the training, seminar or conference for the duration of travel.

Transportation

- Transport to/from ports of entry, meeting venues and official engagements (if not provided by organisers of the meeting), must be:
 - Economical and reasonable, i.e. catching a bus versus a taxi
 - Paid before travel (where possible), e.g., bike hire (Pa Enuā), airport shuttle/bus (NZ).
 - Employees may otherwise make an expense claim on return e.g. taxi expenses
- Where applicable employers may charter a flight to the Pa Enuā for official business, co-sharing of resources amongst agencies or stakeholders is recommended

Expense claim

- In exceptional circumstances where an Official incurs costs above the per diem rates, they may apply for reimbursement of actual costs upon presentation of receipts or approved financial records.
- Reimbursements for other business expenses will only be considered upon presentation of valid receipts. These include:
 - Work related telephone, internet use and printing/photocopying
 - Transport to/from ports of entry, meeting venues and official engagements (if not provided by organisers of the meeting)

Personal expenses such as accommodation extras e.g. mini bar costs and personal communication expenses are to be met by the Official.

Passport and Visa Requirements

It is the responsibility of employers and employees to ensure their passports are current and valid for more than six months for travel.

Where Officials are required to obtain a visitor's visa the Agency will assist with the facilitation of this process. For visa fees paid by the Agency on behalf of the sponsor, it is the responsibility of the Official to ensure reimbursement is made to the Agency.

Official Travel Leave

One day of leave is permitted for officials to recuperate after returning home where there is more than 24 hours of continuous travel and no less than one day layover in transit. This leave is only applicable if arrival is on a working day or Sunday.

Half day leave may be taken if arriving home on a very early morning or very late night flight. This leave is only applicable if arrival is on a working day or a late evening arrival on a Sunday. It must be taken on the morning of arrival (for a morning arrival) or the following morning (for an evening arrival), otherwise it is forfeited.

This leave does not apply if the travel was interrupted with a stopover in transit for personal reasons whilst returning home.

Time off in lieu (TOIL) is permitted if a Cook Islands Public Holiday falls on a working day within the official travel period. The TOIL should be taken soon after returning from travel.

Official Travel Feedback

Officials returning from duty travel must provide a report to their employer within five working days of their arrival using the Representative Feedback Template (Annex 1).

Planned media releases may be required to keep the public informed of developments resulting from the official travel.

Other provisions

All documentation relating to official travel must be retained for audit purposes.

All records relating to the official travel process must be kept for at least seven years and only accessible by the Employer and/or authorised staff. After the seven year period, the Department may destroy the documentation in adherence with Government official information management policies.

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner is responsible for reviewing and updating this Policy and associated documents from time to time.

Associated Documents

Travel Notification Form

Representative Feedback Template

Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) Per Diem Rates

OPSC Per Diem Rates – Domestic Travel only

Code of Conduct Policy 2018

Other information

For Policy queries contact the Office of the Public Service Commissioner on phone (682) 29 421 or email: pscinfo@cookislands.gov.ck

Annex 2

Cook Islands Government Representative Feedback Template

Representative details

Name (s)	
Ministry	
Position Held	
Role	
Sponsor	

Meeting Details

Title	
Venue	
Date(s) and Time(s)	
Organising institution(s)	
Area of Specialty	
Conference details	
Number of Attendees (Countries, Organisations)	

Conference/Workshop/Meeting details

Objectives/Theme	
Recommendations(s)	
Sustainable solutions	
General Comments	
Benefits of attendance for the Cook Islands	
Follow up/work plan implementation	
Dated and Signed	

Annex 3

Public Service Travel Rates [New Zealand Dollars]

Per Diem - Domestic Travel

Jurisdiction	Government Official (Rates per day)				
	Transport	Meals			Incidentals
		B/fast	Lunch	Dinner	
Outer Islands to Rarotonga	Paid direct to provider by invoice	\$20	\$25	\$30	\$20
Rarotonga to Southern Group					\$20
Rarotonga to Northern Group					\$30

Domestic Travel - Accommodation

Jurisdiction	Government Official (Rates per day)
Outer Islands – Private stay	\$50 per day
Outer Islands – Guest house/Motel	Pay direct to provider by invoice
Rarotonga – for Outer Islands	Pay direct to provider by invoice
Rarotonga – Private stay	\$50 per day

Annex 4

Note: For the latest information on Travel Insurance enquire with MFEM - Treasury

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is provided for all Public Service Ministries, Island Governments, Statutory Agencies, Crown Agencies and Ministerial Support Offices. SOEs have their own insurance policies. Officials travelling overseas should contact MFEM to ensure that they have updated travel insurance cover and information:

Placing Slip: CORPORATE TRAVEL

Named Insured:	Government of the Cook Islands, Government Appointed Consultants, New Zealand Judges and New Zealand Health Specialists and any subsidiary company more than half the nominal value whose equity share capital is owned by the named insured either directly or through other subsidiaries, and any entity over which an Insured exercises management control.
Description of Business:	Government and any other activity connected therewith or any other activity of the Insured with which they may become involved.
Period of Insurance:	From: 4.00pm 01 August 2018 To: 4.00pm 01 August 2019 Both Local Standard Time at the Insured's Cook Islands head office
Currency:	All amounts shown are expressed in New Zealand Dollars, unless specified otherwise
Insured Person(s) / Categories:	All Employees or directors of the Policyholder or persons authorised by the Policyholder travelling overseas on authorised business travel or private travel, including accompanying Spouses and families of a Covered Person
Scope of Cover:	Cover under the Policy applies whilst a Covered Person is on a Journey (as defined) undertaken on the Policyholder's business, including any Incidental Private Travel
Journey Description:	Journey means an overseas trip undertaken on the business of the Policyholder and/or authorised by the Policyholder. Cover shall commence from the time a Covered Person leaves their normal place of residence or place of business, whichever is left last and continue on a fulltime twenty-four (24) hour basis until the Covered Person returns to their normal place of residence or place of business, whichever occurs first. The maximum duration of any one (1) trip is one hundred & eighty (180) days
Policy Wording:	Chubb Business Travel Wording 2016
Estimated Travel:	3,000 days
Endorsements:	It is noted and agreed an Excess of Five Hundred dollars (\$500) applies to Section 4 - Medical, Evacuation & Additional Expenses, Section 6 – Loss of Deposits, Cancellation & Disruption & Section 8 – Baggage & Travel. Documents with respect to any Incidental Private Travel and/or Directors & Executives Private Travel.
Insurer:	Chubb Insurance New Zealand Limited
Proportion:	100% unless otherwise stated for each Insurer
Signed By:	CHUBB Insurance New Zealand Limited Company No. 104656 FSP No. 35294
Dated:	1/8/18