



Southern Pine Council International Travel Guidelines and Requirements

Preparation for Travel

Travel expenses will be covered as long as they are related to marketing activities approved by the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). Travel is funded by the USDA FAS Foreign Market Development (FMD) and Market Access Programs (MAP). There are specific requirements for reimbursement under these programs.

Notify SPC First – to reserve your spot for an event, an International Event Registration form must be sent to SPC via email (lpatch@sfpa.org), mail (6660 Riverside Drive Suite 212, Metairie, LA 70003) or fax (504-443-6612) **at least 45 days in advance** of the first authorized travel day of a selected event.

Travel Guidance – Once a Registration Form is submitted to SPC, staff will confirm receipt via email and will attach the Guidelines and Requirements, Conduct Guide, and Post-Trip Reporting requirements. Travelers are expected to review these guidelines prior to their mission and contact SPC with any questions.

One Traveler Limit – Due to high demand, event attendance is limited to only one representative per company. A second company rep may be wait-listed and be approved later if circumstances permit.

Book Air Travel Early – After your Registration Form is received by SPC and your participation confirmed, your airline reservations can be booked. Air travel must be booked **at least 45 days in advance** to secure your registration for the mission. Early booking usually yields a cheaper fare, which helps stretch limited travel resources. If air travel is not booked in time, your registration for that event may be transferred to a wait-listed traveler.

Air Travel Documents – We highly recommend the use of Uptown Landing Cruise & Travel. Please call 503-241-8441 or email Jennifer Davis: jennifer@uptownlandingtravel.com), who is familiar with the FAS travel requirement guidelines. If Jennifer is not available, please ask for Tricia or Gayle. Once booked, they will provide SPC with all the necessary documentation for FAS reimbursement. If you plan to go off-mission, we strongly suggest use of Uptown Landing. They provide the proper comparisons necessary for FAS reimbursement.

If you choose to make your own reservations, we require you send a DRAFT of your itinerary to SPC for approval (lpatch@sfpa.org or tkessler@sfpa.org) prior to booking your airline ticket to ensure that it complies with FAS regulations. **Tickets that do not comply with the Foreign Agricultural Service and SPC guidelines cannot be reimbursed. Any off-mission excursions must be noted. If your plans change once we approve, or full itinerary was not disclosed, you may not be eligible for reimbursement.**

Once your airline ticket is booked, please email your actual ticket and/or passenger receipt showing your flight itinerary and the breakdown of the cost of your airline ticket. Documentation must breakdown the taxes, fees and base fare. **E-tickets purchased from online discount websites (Orbitz, Expedia, etc.) are not allowed.**

Use Approved Air Carriers – US flag air carriers must be used when traveling between the US and a foreign country or when available outside the US. Code share flights must be purchased through the US carrier and show the US carrier flight number. This requirement is not influenced by factors of cost, convenience, or personal travel preference.

Cancellation – Notify SPC immediately if travel plans are cancelled or modified. SPC is required to send an official travel notification to the USDA FAS office located in the destination country prior to each event, and it must include an accurate manifest of mission personnel and their travel dates.

Check Visa Requirements – Countries such as China, India, and others require a visa for US travelers. Visa issuance may take considerable time, so check the destination country for visa requirements well in advance of travel. [Find visa services.](#)

Lodging – **Do not** book with hotel discounters or purchase agency travel packages. These will not provide the detailed hotel folio required by USDA FAS regulations (see Hotel Folio definition below).

No Meal Receipts – Meals are covered under a daily per diem rate set for each event city, so receipts need not be submitted to SPC. [Check meal per diem rates.](#)

Documents Required for Reimbursement

No later than 30 days following participation in a trade show, sales mission, or trade mission, the traveler must provide SPC with the following:

1. **Air Travel** – Since a copy of your airline ticket is required before you travel, we should already have this information on file. However, if you modified your itinerary or flights, you must let us know when it occurs. Change fees are not reimbursable. **Keep airline boarding passes. These must be submitted to SPC with other receipts upon return and must match the airline ticket.**
2. **Hotel Folio** – The hotel folio breaks down each day's expenses accrued at the hotel. A credit card statement or hotel reservation is not acceptable. Most hotels issue a folio at checkout, but if not provided, it is the traveler's responsibility to request one at departure. The actual hotel room charge will be reimbursed, up to the per diem amount. [Check lodging per diem rates.](#)
3. **Ground Transportation** – This includes mission-related taxis, shuttles, trains, subways, and the like. Location of origin and final destination must be written on each receipt. Rental vehicles are not reimbursable.
4. **Communications** – Per FAS rules, SPC will reimburse telephone/Internet charges of \$15.00 per hotel night with valid documentation from the hotel folio, cell phone bill, etc. In-flight internet costs are not reimbursable.
5. **Miscellaneous** – Document personal vehicle mileage to/from home airport with a Google maps printout. Submit the original airport parking receipt.
6. **Post-Trip Reports** – After each event, each traveler will be provided a travel template and the Event Evaluation and Matching Funds forms that must be completed and returned to finalize the reimbursement paperwork. ALL expenses and post-trip reporting must be received no later than 30 days following the eligible travel dates. Reports received after 60 days are not guaranteed to be reimbursed.
7. All expenses are subject to an after-the-fact audit by SPC and FAS compliance auditors. Expenses may be disallowed after the fact if they do not adhere to guidelines and regulations. Any SPC traveler whose expenses are disallowed by the FAS audit will be liable for the amount that is not allowed.

SPC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

[FAS Non-Discrimination Policy](#) [FAS Accessibility Statement](#)