NIH Policy Manual

1500 - Travel Policies and Procedures

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Transmittal Notice

1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** The Office of Financial Management (OFM), Office of Management (OM), Office of the Director (OD) is rescinding this Chapter, including all Appendices within NIH Manual Chapter 1500. Superseding this chapter is the Temporary NIH Manual Chapter 0005: NIH Travel Policy. This temporary chapter provides updated travel policy and requirements while the HHS Travel Policy Manual dated September 10, 2018 (Edition #: 2018-Q4) undergoes revision. The HHS Travel Policy Manual is available here.
2. **Filing Instructions:**

- **Remove:** NIH Manual Chapter 1500 dated 08/20/1999 including all Appendices.
- **Insert:** Temporary NIH Manual Chapter 0005: NIH Travel Policy dated 08/03/2023.

PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above
- NIH Policy Manual, contact the Division of Compliance Management, Office of Management Assessment, OM on 301-496-4606 or enter this URL: https://oma.od.nih.gov/DMS/Pages/Manual-Chapters.aspx

A. Purpose

The purpose of this transmittal is to rescind Manual Chapter (MC) 1500 – Travel Policies and Procedures in its entirety. This rescission includes all Chapters and Appendices within the NIH MC1500 (Subchapters 1500-01 through 1500-15 listed in Appendix A below). Although each subchapter has been issued and dated individually, there has not been a complete review of all subchapter topics since August 1999. Since that time, some chapters/appendices have been completely revised, while others have had only partial revisions.

Concurrent with this rescission, the Issuing Office is also releasing a Temporary Policy Manual Chapter 0005 - NIH Travel Policy. As with the MC1500 series, MC-0005 is consistent with the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) Chapters 300 through 304 and the HHS 2018 Travel Policy as amended through July 1, 2023.

B. Scope

The policy in this chapter applies to all NIH Institutes, Centers, or Office of the Director (OD) Offices (ICOs) and any personnel involved in planning, approving, or traveling on NIH official business (i.e., the NIH Travel Community).

C. Background

Between the initial publication of the NIH Travel Policy in August 1999 and December 2020, the OFM Travel Policy Branch (OFM/TPB) updated MC1500 series frequently by a series of minor policy revisions. Following substantial changes to NIH business operations due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the NIH issued Temporary Policy MC0003, Temporary Business Functions Related to the Coronavirus Pandemic. This Policy instituted a restriction on most NIH travel and increased approval channels. NIH efforts to establish return to work policies as the pandemic subsided included an assessment of the Institutes' readiness to return to travel.

D. Actions Leading to Rescission

At the direction of the NIH Senior Travel Official (STO), the OFM/TPB began a review of NIH policy and determined that much of the policy did not adequately address post-pandemic work and official travel. Further, the existing MC1500 Subchapter structure was inconsistent with both the FTR and existing (2018) HHS policy. At several points, NIH policy in one chapter was inconsistent with stated policy in another chapter. Following a series of reviews and briefings with NIH leadership, HHS Travel Policy representatives, and the HHS Office of the General Counsel, it was decided that the most effective approach to align NIH policy with current regulation and HHS policy was to:

- rescind the entire MC1500 series,
- issue a Temporary Policy that was consistent with current regulation, and
- establish a Travel Policy Workgroup that would oversee the development of updated NIH policy with an accompanying procedures guidebook.

E. Temporary Policy Handbook

Concurrent with this recission transmittal, OFM/TPB will issue MC0005 NIH Travel Policy. The NIH Travel Policy Handbook establishes the NIH's temporary travel policy and requirements pending release of the updated HHS Travel Policy Manual for all Federal employees as well as nonfederal employees, invitational travelers, consultants, experts, etc.

who perform official Government travel for the NIH. The NIH Travel Policy Handbook is a consolidation of the NIH Manual Chapters 1500 series on Travel and provides users with the complete source of NIH policies and procedures pertaining to official travel, its authorization and performance, and submission of claims for reimbursement of expenses. It is based on travel regulations found in the HHS Travel Policy Manual and the FTR. The Handbook is intended for use by NIH full time employees (FTE) and non-FTE employees, invitational travelers, consultants, and others authorized to travel on behalf of the NIH, as well as by personnel responsible for the preparation of travel documents and administration of travel regulations.

F. Next Steps

While this rescission and issuance of temporary policy align NIH travel policy with the FTR and HHS Travel Policy as amended through July 1, 2023, the OFM/TPB will continue to work with the NIH travel community through its recently established Travel Policy Workgroup. The Workgroup will:

- Review upcoming HHS Policy and ensure that NIH Policy remains consistent.
- Identify opportunities for streamlining policy and revising MC0005 to place travel policy decision-making at the lowest organizational level feasible.
- Assist with restructuring chapters in the NIH Travel Policy Handbook to be more consistent with both upcoming HHS policy and the FTR.
- Reissue MC1500 within two years of MC0005 issuance with a newly drafted procedures guidebook.

Appendix A

The chapters within NIH Manual 1500 that are included in this rescission are as follows:

- Chapter 1500-01: Introduction to Official Government Travel
- Chapter 1500-02: Traveler Responsibilities
- Chapter 1500-03: Transportation
- Chapter 1500-04: Per Diem and Other Allowable Expenses
- Chapter 1500-05: Advance of Funds/Government-Issued Charge Card
- Chapter 1500-06: Local Travel
- Chapter 1500-07: International Travel
- Chapter 1500-08: Acceptance of Payment from a Nonfederal Source to Cover Travel Expenses [Sponsored Travel]
- Chapter 1500-09: Relocation Allowances
- Chapter 1500-10: Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel and Relocation of Non-FTE Persons
- Chapter 1500-11: Use of NIH Official Travel Management Center
- Chapter 1500-12: Travel for Consultants, Experts, Private Citizens and Foreign Visitors
- Chapter 1500-13: Premium-Class Airline Accommodations
- Chapter 1500-15: Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998 Requirements