How to Safely Negotiate the Return to Workplace Travel

Resource Type: Articles

Topic: Facility, Program and Transportation Safety

As business travel continues to rebound post-COVID, make sure your nonprofit is ready. Here's a checklist to evaluate the risks and benefits of travel and navigate health and security issues wherever your team is headed.

Cornerstones of Safe Business Travel

Create or update your organization's travel policy.

Keep in mind that a travel policy for a small nonprofit may consist of a one-page list of reminders and tips, while the policy for a large international nonprofit is likely to be multiple pages long.

Policies might include:

- Travel recommendations and requirements
- What travel expenses your organization will and will not cover
  Tip: *lead with respect and flexibility: For example, "Employees are expected to use good judgment regarding expenses covered by this Policy, including the selection of carriers, hotels and ground transportation options."*
- Whether your nonprofit permits or requires that staff book refundable tickets
  Tip: *although refundable airfares generally cost more than nonrefundable fares, it would be a shame to waste money on a ticket that can't be used due to circumstances beyond your team member's control.*
- Approved or preferred travel partners and providers
- Approval steps or procedures before booking travel
- Communication expectations while on travel
- General tips on staying safe while traveling
- Vaccination, visa, and other requirements
- COVID-related considerations, such as:
  - precautionary health screenings for employees and their families
  - health and safety practices (for social distancing, masking, etc.) that follow the recommendations of official organizations such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization

Determine if travel insurance is applicable for the trip.

Speak with the agent or broker for your nonprofit's property and casualty coverages to determine which, if any, policies are applicable to business travel. Determine if your volume of upcoming travel warrants purchasing additional coverage, and also whether you will encourage or discourage travelers from purchasing coverage from rental car providers.

Before You Book

Review your organization's travel policies. Make sure you understand them. If you're uncertain about

anything, now is the time to ask.

Check travel advisories for any health and safety issues at your destination. The U.S. Department of State website lists travel advisories for security issues, such as terrorist activity, and for COVID outbreaks. The Johns Hopkins University & Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center maps global and U.S. state virus outbreak data and trends.

Obtain approval for the trip from your supervisor and any other necessary parties. Talk with your supervisor about risks, threats, and risk reduction measures specific to your location.

Confirm requirements to visit your destination and prepare to meet them. Apply for any necessary visas and schedule any required vaccinations. Allow plenty of extra time in case of processing delays.

Before Travel

Book your itinerary according to your organization's policy. Where possible, book well in advance of your trip, as fares tend to increase as departure dates near.

Schedule a security briefing before travel to higher-risk locations. Ask about local customs at your destination and how to maintain personal safety in your environment, as well as location-specific terrorist threats and what to do if you encounter them.

Update your immunization record if traveling internationally. Carry a copy of your record during the trip.

Screen for health issues as appropriate. Self-test or get tested for COVID and any other required health screenings according to your organization's policy.

Have alternative payment methods ready. Pack at least one back-up personal credit card and bring some cash in case organizational credit cards aren't accepted at your destination.

Designate a staff member to check in with while traveling. Set a schedule for how frequently you will check in and by what method.

Understand your technology options and limitations. Pack the necessary technology to connect safely and securely at your destination; if possible, identify a back-up option for connecting, such as a personal hotspot.

During Travel

Check in with your designee every day. Make sure to use the agreed-on check-in method if possible.

Use good judgment. Don't draw attention to yourself in your actions or manner. Stay aware of your environment. Never give out personal information or mention that you are traveling alone.

When in doubt, leave the situation. Avoid putting yourself in any environment or interaction where you feel unsafe. Trust your intuition and take action.

Recognize and follow local laws and regulations. Respect the cultural norms and laws of your host location. When in doubt, ask!

Report any concerns, even if they seem small, to the appropriate contact person at your organization or host.

Be proactive with your health. Mask according to your comfort level, that of your hosts, and the health risks of the situation to you and others. Wash your hands frequently. Replenish yourself with nourishing food and rest. Seek treatment for any health issues that arise immediately.

Upon Your Return

Notify your supervisor immediately when you return. Report any security issues that arose during the

trip.

Return any IT equipment you borrowed for use during the trip.

Complete expense reports by the due date. Include required receipts. Double-check that you have recorded and reported all credit card transactions and reimbursable expenses.

Debrief with your supervisor and any other required colleagues. What was your experience with safety, security, and health on the trip? What can you and your organization learn from your experience for the future?

Take time to process your experience. It’s easy to jump right back into regular routines after travel. But take a moment to celebrate a successful trip, or acknowledge that you handled challenging situations during travel to the best of your ability. Recall the new things you saw, heard, and experienced. What did you learn? What will stay with you?