



Agenda Item 3(a) (iii): Travel Policy Review

Purpose

The Board is invited to review and consider the draft travel policy and to consider the proposed recommendations discussed below.

Background

2. At the Port Vila Board meeting, the Board endorsed and agreed to engage a consultant to work with the Secretariat to draft a Travel Policy to guide the Secretariat in organising all business- related travel for the Secretariat and for the Travel Policy to be tabled to the Board for their consideration.

3. The Secretariat after reviewing the market rate of consultant experts in the region determined that the budget allocated to recruit the consultant wasn't sufficient to meet the costs and in addition to cost cutting measures put in by the Secretariat determined that the Secretariat will take the responsibility of drafting the Travel Policy to save costs and to also allow the Secretariat to allocate the savings to other In-country Programme Activities.

4. The draft Travel policy intends to assist the Secretariat in organising travel for Members and staff and to help improve travel governance and travel efficiency.

5. PIDC travel is the largest expense driver of the Secretariat's annual operating budget, consuming more than 55% of the Programme Activities. This is due to the nature of its work in the region and in its member countries which requires significant travel by the Members and Secretariat Staff to attend these PIDC activities. International travel expenses have doubled post Covid as international travel has become more expensive. The high cost of flight and accommodation is evident as the international travel and hospitality industry recovers from the impact of COVID-19. Consequently, the Secretariat sees the need to revisit its travel regulation to identify how it can cut costs and improve travel efficiency when arranging travel.

Regulation 14 – Travel

6. PIDC Financial Regulation 14 provided the governance structure for PIDC travel, both domestic and international travel. It regulates PIDC's (i) travel planning and budgeting; (ii) travel bookings; (iii) per diems; (iv) actual and reasonable expenses; (v) travel insurance; and (vi) approvals when travelling on PIDC business.

7. The current Regulation is very general and lacks detailed provisions for clear application. The Draft Travel Policy attached as Annex 1 seeks to provide clarity while allowing flexibility and minimizing costs.

Way Forward

8. Draft One of the Travel Policy has been completed and it is proposed that the draft document is to be reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee with a view to presenting to the Board for endorsement at the second Board meeting in March 2024.

Proposed Recommendations

The Board is invited to:

- (i) **note** and welcome the review of PIDC travel regulations;
- (ii) **task** the Secretariat to finalise the Draft Travel Policy and to work intermittently with the Audit and Risk Committee to finalise the Travel Policy to support the enforcement of Financial Regulation 14



PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY SECRETARIAT

DRAFT PIDC TRAVEL POLICY

Version 1

October 2023

DRAFT

1. Purpose

These proposed travel policies are to help PIDC establish a clear guideline for all business-related travels and reimbursement of associated expenditure. These policies are vital to enable staff, Members and the organisation meet audit and accountability requirements.

2. Applicable

The Travel Policy shall be applicable to official travel, fully funded or partially funded by PIDC for staff, ALL PIDC Board Directors/ PIDC Members, all attendees of PIDC sponsored meetings/ training sessions and Consultants (unless otherwise stipulated in the service contract). For the purpose of clarity, the policy will generically refer to Officer which covers all the above unless it refers specifically to a particular category - such as staff.

3. Travel Planning and expenses

In the Pacific, the most efficient method of international travel is via air services. If there is a requirement for travel either by sea or by road, guidelines are also included.

- 3.1. At the same time, it should be noted that all Member countries do not enjoy the same level of airline services and some are on “**long thin routes**”. This means that services maybe on a weekly basis or operated on a monopoly basis.
- 3.2. The nature of PIDC work in the Immigration and Border security in the region for its member countries requires significant travel by PIDC staff and its Members in ensuring to provide better service to its Member countries. While travel is normally professionally and can be personally rewarding for PIDC staff, it can also be demanding. Travel is not to be viewed as a perk or burden. It is a part of the roles that the Secretariat staff accept as working in a Regional Organisation.
- 3.3. Travel in the region, most of it is by air, is very expensive and harms the environment and one of the largest expenses for the Secretariat. Travel cost must be managed very carefully to ensure there is balance between the Secretariat’s effort for cost efficiency and effectiveness and PIDC’s commitments to its Members in meeting the priorities agreed to in its Strategic Plan. Many jobs can be done effectively in country, but much work can be done at a distance using email, video conferencing.
- 3.4. The Secretariat staff should have the general principle therefore that travel should **only happen if and only is necessary**. Travel should be discussed with Head of Secretariat and Senior Management before approval is granted. Travel should be vis the most direct and lowest cost alternative and consistent with clear business practice.
- 3.5. Official Travel and expenses that included in the travel should be approved only in circumstances which clearly aligned with PIDC Strategic Plan and Approved Work Programme Activities. It is the responsibilities of the **Head of Secretariat** to ensure all staff travel meets its objectives and payment are made only for reasonable expenses in connection with authorized travel.
- 3.6. All Travel including sponsored travel must be requested using the PIDC Travel request Form (**attached Annex1**) approved by the Head of Secretariat. Subsequent to travel, travel arrangements including airfares, accommodations and planning of meetings should be coordinated through the Finance and Human Resources team who should seek 3 quotes from any accredited travel agency or airline.

4. Class, route and mode of travel

All air travel should be economy class and by the most direct and economical route.

- 4.1. In determining the most direct and economical route, reasonable consideration and flexibility should be given in terms of weighing costs against other relevant factors and constraints such as airline safety records, airline schedules, duration of flights, personal health, length of absence from the office and etc.
- 4.2. Travel should be booked on refundable airfares (as these have the most travel flexibility) or the next most cost-effective fare for PIDC unless the travel is confirmed and there will be no change.
- 4.3. Where travel is to one destination only e.g., Apia direct to either Suva / Nadi / Sydney / Brisbane / Auckland; excursion or special fares may be utilized to save costs. This would also be applicable for travelers from Island countries attending meetings in metropolitan countries where direct air services exist. E.g. Port Vila – Auckland / Brisbane or Rarotonga – Auckland / Sydney etc.
- 4.4. Given the mix of Legacy Carriers and Low-Cost Carriers offering a wide range of airfares and services the Secretariat must adhere to a standard so that an apple to apples comparison be made for the best value for money can be made. A legacy carrier will often include in its “**economy class**” airfare a baggage allowance plus complimentary food and beverage. A low-cost carrier will have baggage, food and beverage as an add-on. Therefore, the Secretariat must include these add-ons when obtaining travel quote. Inflight add-ons are normally available via electronic means and some of our sponsored travelers may not have such a resource available.
- 4.5. PIDC does not require staff to use frequent flyer points or miles accrued as a result of official travel for future official travel. Rather, staff may use points for upgrades (including for official travel) or for private travel. This policy is for administrative simplicity and in recognition of the flexibility that staff are expected to demonstrate when travelling on PIDC business (e.g. weekend travel). Air carrier selection must, however, not be influenced by the traveller’s frequent flyer affiliation. The cost of the ticket should take precedence. As such, any frequent flyer membership fees are the personal responsibility of the staff or member.

Travel Authorisation

- 4.6. Any changes to PIDC travel should be authorised only by the Head of Secretariat (HOS) after consultations with the Finance & Corporate Service (FCS) Manager in terms of budget or the Deputy Head of Secretariat (DHOS) in the absence of the FCS Manager. Travel Plan **as attached in Annex 2** should be filled together with the travel request and send to HOS for approval. Changes must be directly related to the official duty travel. In the event of flight or other disruptions (including weather or political unrest) requiring rerouting and additional accommodation, HOS has the authority to immediately approve such change in consultation with the DHOS and the FCS Manager in terms of the costs associated with the changes.
- 4.7. In the event of a family emergency requiring that an Officer to return home, approval must be sought from HOS (or DHOS in the absence of the HOS) before FCS Manager can authorise amendments. It is envisaged that family emergency would entail nuclear family where a spouse/partner, child or parent has had an accident or is in critical care etc. Normally a sibling would not be considered nuclear unless the Officer is single.
- 4.8. In situations where additional costs are incurred for flights due to negligence of the Officer or for non-official changes, the additional costs will be the responsibility of the Officer. In the event that an Officer neglects to front for a flight thus incurring additional charges, the Secretariat may assist in repatriation and any additional costs may be recovered later by payroll deduction or discussion with the Officer or relevant Government

authorities/employer. Approval must be sought from the HOS prior to authorizing these additional costs and for any recovery action.

- 4.9. Personal travels are not encouraged during or to be incorporated into official travel unless it has been approved by the HOS and any additional costs to be borne by the staff member or if travel related to any PIDC Member official travel approval should be sorted from the Director Immigration in country before any changes is done.
- 4.10. In exceptional cases, business class travel may be considered for approval by the HOS after consultations with the Board Chair. This provision will only be considered in the case of “arduous travel.” And within the following guidelines:
- i. travel is more than 10 hours
 - ii. it is a funding agency requirement.
 - iii. the staff members have a medical condition that makes business class a more appropriate option.
 - iv. where a member is expected to work (e.g., attend a meeting) without being able to adequately rest between arrival and the meeting; however, in such a case consideration should be given to bringing the departure forward by a day. Although this option involves an extra per diem it is much less expensive than business travel and normally less stressful for the traveler. For the purpose of this policy adequate rest is defined as a minimum of 8 hours in a hotel room and excludes ground transport time or waiting in a hotel lobby to check in.
- 4.11. For travel to an island where travel is by sea, any travel during the hours of darkness or more than 4 hours will require a cabin be booked if available.
- 4.12. Road transport usually refers to taxi, bus or other public transport means. Use of rental cars or private vehicles may only be considered if public transportation is not readily available or considered a potential risk. Secretariat staff may use rental cars/vans for logistical reasons. Where private vehicles are used, cost would be calculated based on actual mileage usage using the prevailing UNDP local transport rates. In these situations, prior approval is required from the HOS.

5. Per Diems

- a) Sometimes also referred to as ‘daily subsistence allowance’ or DSA, per diems cover your expenses while travelling. Per diems are country-specific and set at 75% of the prevailing UNDP rate.
- b) Per diems are normally calculated based on time of departure from base and time of departure from the last airport/station before heading back to base. In the event that there are multiple flights and crossing of the date line, the per diem paid **cannot** exceed the total number of nights a traveler is away from home (except where early/late arrivals/departure clause is applicable).

5.1 Expenses covered by Per Diems

Per diem cover the following expenses:

- the standard per diem for the destination country is the basis for the per diem calculation while at sea. Accommodation component of per diem will not be applicable if fare includes full boarding while at sea. For day trips 40% of the Per diem is applicable. For travel where staff are required to arrive early (before 8am) or depart late (after 8pm) the Per diem maybe adjusted to take into account the additional accommodation or meal requirements such as accommodation booked for the previous night or dayroom charge for late checkout. If an Officer is required to work or be based at another location for more than 30 days (say training attachment etc.) normally the Per diem will reduce to 75% of the rate provided accommodation with cooking facilities has been provided. Otherwise, the full Per diem is

applicable. Travel with dependents accompanying and sharing a room with a staff member travelling on appointment, home leave or end-of-contract travel are entitled to the following per diem rates:

- Spouse and child 12 years and over: 40 per cent
- Child under 12 years: 20 per cent.
- If the size of the family necessitates more than one room or a larger room, HOS approval is required (or Board Chair for HOS family travel)

Per diem is calculated as follows excluding accommodations.

Calculation of Per Diems

Meals:

Breakfast 10%

Lunch 22%

Dinner 58%

Incidentals 10%

Each full 24 hours of travel: Full per diem

8 hours of transit or more: Full per diem

For stop overs (transit) of between 4 to 8 hours: Half day per diem

For stop overs (transit) of 4 hours and less: No per diem

If attends a conference that is hosted by another body and accommodation or meals are provided, then the accommodation or meal portion of the per diem would be reduced accordingly

5.2 Accommodation:

The Secretariat recognises the need for Officers travelling on official business to be accommodated in an appropriate standard of accommodation to ensure optimal effectiveness while undertaking official business. It is the Officer's responsibility to ensure accommodation selected is safe and secure, clean and hygienic, and conveniently located for the purpose of the visit.

A reasonable top-up will be approved for Officers if they can prove that the only reasonable hotel will cost more than the accommodation portion of the per diem. If the meeting site is in an upmarket facility and in a remote area, the Officer may provide this information in a timely manner, the per diem can be topped up prior to departure but receipts must be provided to the secretariat for audit purposes. Failure to provide such receipts will result in the top up being reclaimed. The Secretariat will arrange to pay the accommodation directly to the hotel direct allowing the Officer not to worry about the Accommodation booking.

Where travel outside the region is approved, PIDC may provide reimbursement to the travelling officer if the per diem provided by the outside sponsor was lower than the PIDC per diem rate for the country concerned. Claims for such reimbursement should be supported by relevant documents from the sponsoring organization.

5.3 Meals (included in the per diem or DSA)

The allowance is expected to cover breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

If meals are provided e.g., breakfast included in a hotel tariff, or lunches are provided during a seminar, then the per diem will be reduced for that specific day. However, secretariat staff on duty during meal times and cannot reasonably partake in those meals shall receive the full per diem authorised by the Head of Secretariat in consultation with the Finance & Corporate Manager

In the event that a staff member is in a city/town where that staff member would normally reside, and decides to stay at "home" then the per diem will be reduced by 50% but an ex-gratia payment of \$50 (in local currency) per night will be paid in lieu of official accommodation being provided. If the staff member elects to stay in official accommodations, then the full per diem rate shall be paid.

5.4 Incidentals (as calculated as 10% in the per diem)

Incidental covers expenses usually associated with travelling and working away from headquarters.

Examples include:

- a) currency exchange rate fees / commissions
- b) charges for travelers' cheques
- c) private phone calls/internet (e.g., calls to family)
- d) laundry charges
- e) all local transport fees (of a personal nature)
- f) tips
- g) expenditures of a personal nature
- h) airport transfer fees while in transit

5.5 Other reimbursable travel expenses

The following are other expenses usually associated with official travel and per diems are not expected to cover. Staff may lodge claims for any of these expenses provided the expenses are related to official business and that receipts and other relevant documentation and confirmation are provided.

- a) Communication costs, such as for official phone calls, fax, postage and Internet access
- b) Photocopying and printing charges
- c) Excess luggage for Office cargo like printed materials carried by Staff.
- d) Departure taxes
- e) 50 percent of passport application fees
- f) 100 percent of visa costs
- g) Parking fees for official vehicles and rental cars
- h) Airport transfers – arrival, departure and at country where meeting is held and Samoa.
- i) Airport terminal transfers where ground transport is required between different terminals or between a domestic to international terminal. (subject to receipts and quantam)
- j) Approved official Hospitality expenses
- k) Safety equipment

5.6 non-reimbursable travel expenses

Any other expense that is not included above will not be reimbursed unless the staff member provides sufficient evidence that the expense was incurred for official business

Airport transfer to the airport for all staff is included (as an additional calculation) in the per diem.

Airport transfer outside of Samoa is included under expenses that are reimbursable on production of receipts. Transport rates are based on the current standard taxi fare rates as published by the Samoa Land Transport Authority

Payment of per diems

Per diems for the travel shall be calculated by the Finance team using the travel form based on the authorised itinerary. The approved travel form and itinerary should be submitted to Corporate Manager at least 10 working days prior to departure to allow timely processing

It is preferred that any per diems be paid into staff bank account prior to travel. However, funds may be provided via cheques (or cash in exceptional cases) as there is increased workload. In the

event of the travel being cancelled, all prepaid per diems must be returned within 2 weeks. Failure to do so will result in this being automatically deducted from salary/wages at the next pay cycle.

For Members where the PIDC event is organized in Samoa, per diems are to be paid and distributed to Members upon arrival in Apia. Where PIDC event is hosted by Members other than Samoa, per diems are to be distributed to participants in attendance, where the per diems are to be paid into the foreign currency exchange agency and cash collected in destination country by a PIDC Employee. In the event that no PIDC employee is travelling, funds are to be directly deposited to individual participants accounts.

5.7 Accountable Advance

Accountable Advances (AA) are not encouraged and can only be for business related expenditure that cannot be reasonably predicted by budget holders. **Per diems for participants are exceptions.** Accountable advances (in exceptional circumstances) should include authorising the PIDC Staff approved to receive the AA in the absence of the responsible budget holder. The responsibility to manage/authorise expenditure and perform such an AA rest primarily with the budget holder. Other than participants' per diems, all other expenses for the AA should normally be at least USD\$200 and no more than USD\$3,000. AA in excess of USD\$3,000 should be for exceptional cases only with thorough justification provided, and require approval by the HOS (or the Board Chair for travel by the HOS)

5.8 Travel Acquittal

- a) Travel acquittal is required in all cases where AA has been made, or when an PIDC staff is seeking reimbursement of expenses that have not been funded through the per diem allocation. Any balance from advance should be repaid within two weeks of return from office.
- b) Travel Acquittal claims must be submitted within two weeks of return from travel, with a detail analysis of expenditures to be met from each programme activities. Receipts and written documentation of payment must be submitted to finance.
- c) PIDC Staff cannot request for another AA if they have not settled any previous outstanding Accountable Advance.

5.9 Travel Insurance

PIDC Travel Insurance covers staff and Members travelling for Official purpose. Details of the coverage are available from the Finance team. The Secretariat has a corporate travel insurance policy in place which covers all overseas business travel by staff. Staff members submitting claims for missing, damaged or stolen luggage or personal effects, must notify the Finance Officer, Travel as soon as practical after the occurrence of the incident. It is essential that documentation is provided relating to the items involved, and where possible, provides police, airline and/or hotel reports and other relevant details required to verify an insurance claim.

5.10 Travel Risk Management

Officers on official travel are responsible for their own health and safety and must ensure that they do not do anything that creates or increases risks to their health and safety. While the Pacific is a safe community some destinations may pose certain risks like:

- l) Civil unrest
- m) Diseases/Illness
- n) Personal criminal attack (e.g., theft, sexual assault and physical attack.
- o) Natural disasters



In the event that staff are already at the location of a significant incident (such as civil unrest or natural disaster) they must follow any advice issued by the relevant authorities at the location. Staff shall notify their supervisors or the Finance Manager of their situation as soon as practical.

5.11 Travel Report

All PIDC Staff travelling on official travels are required to submit a Travel Report (template attached) within 2 weeks of return from official travel. A report is required for all official travel even if the travel is fully sponsored from an external source. The report should be sent to HOS. Further request for travel may be declined if a prior Travel report is outstanding.

5.12 Travel Time Off

The Secretariat recognizes the importance of a healthy work life balance and is mindful that even though travel is part of being a PIDC Member, official travel impacts on Officers health and personal time away from home and weekends. The HOS may grant reasonable time off for staff, immediately upon return from duty travel. Time off is not to be taken at a later date for accredited.

ANNEX 1

PIDC/ 1
TRAVEL REQUEST
20 October 2023

TO: Akuila Ratu (HOS)

FROM: DHOS)

Name of Meeting:

Venue:

Start/End Dates:

Purpose of Travel:

Include Objectives to be achieved and details of consultations with other relevant people.
(Not more than three paras).

Benefits of Travel:

Include a summary of the benefit that will accrue to Members and the Secretariat and how this will help the Secretariat deliver to its Work Programme.

Proposed Travel Dates:	<u>Departure Date (ex-Apia)</u>	<u>Arrival Date (Apia)</u>
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Estimated Cost:	<u>Airfares</u> \$12,000	<u>Per Diems</u> \$2000.00	<u>Other Costs</u> Accommodation \$4500. Miscellaneous WST \$500.
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Budget:	<u>SFA Programme</u>	<u>Source of Funding (RB, XB, XXB)</u>
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Finance:	<u>Confirmed Funding Available (signature of Finance Manager)</u>
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Approved by HOS

Date:

TRAVEL PLAN #

DATE

PERSON TRAVELLING

PREPARED:

1. Purpose of Travel:

2. Travel Proposal :

ROUTE	DAY/ DATE	FLIGHT	TIME
APIA/NADI	THU 09 DECEMBER	FJ254	1600/1700
NADI/SUVA	SUNDAY 12 DEC	BY ROAD	12PM/4PM
SUVA/NADI	THURSDAY 03 FEB	BY ROAD	7AM/10AM
NADI/APIA	THURSDAY 03 FEB2	FJ255	12:15PM/4PM



3. AIRFARE COST: FJD\$2403 SEMI FLEXI (ECONOMY CLASS) FIJI AIRWAYS 4. PER DIEM REQUESTED: Yes, as detailed below: Including ROAD ALLOWANCE OF 5. ACCOMODATIONS: PERSONAL OR BUSINESS TRAVEL 6. EXPENSE CODE: _____ PROJECT CODE: _____			
7. Special Instructions: a) Please pay the following: road allowance both ways b) Transport costs from airport to hotel ()			
8. Please acquitt upon return by submitting all receipts of payment to Finance			
For person travelling: <div style="text-align: center;"> ----- PIDC SECRETARIAT </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> Date </div>			
13. Approval by HEAD OF SECRETARIAT: _____ <div style="text-align: center;"> HEAD OF SECRETARIT-PIDC </div>			Date: _____
14. Finance	Calculated by: _____ Checked by _____ Per Diem paid _____ Cheque # _____	<u>Initial</u> _____ _____ _____ _____	<u>Date</u> _____ _____ _____ _____

ANNEX 3

PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY - TRAVEL ACQUITTAL

Travel Plan Number

Name:

Date of Travel:

1.	Advances	Per Diem Accommodation Adv Accountable Advance MCO Other	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
		Total	_____



2. **Travel** Travel was completed as per the original travel plan:
 or Revised and approved TP #..... is attached together with unused coupons/MCO

3. **Hotels** I paid for accommodation on the following nights:
 I did not pay for accommodation on the following nights:
 The Secretariat or host organisation provided accommodation on the following nights.
 I was accommodated privately on the following nights.

4. **Expenses**

Date	Country	Payment	Type of Expense	Receipt #	Currency	Amount	Finance Only		
							Rate	F\$	Ledger

5. **Declaration:** I certify that the above expenses were incurred by me and are an official charge against the Secretariat in accordance with the current travel guidelines. I agree to refund the Secretariat any amount due within two weeks of completion of travel.

Officer Travelling: _____ Date: _____

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

TRAVEL ACQUITTAL ATTACHMENTS CHECKLIST



Note: Unless noted otherwise, all attachments should be originals. If originals cannot be provided, please indicate reason.

Ticket stub or E-ticket	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boarding passes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation invoices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy of final, approved travel plan and per diem calculation sheet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Revised travel plan (duly approved) where original travel plan changed for any reason	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy of any unused coupons ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>

justifications)

Summary sheet listing expenses claimed, cross referenced to receipts/invoices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Original receipts / invoices for expenses claimed, cross referenced to summary sheet above	<input type="checkbox"/>

Where external funds relating to the travel were received from any external source

Declaration or calculation sheet from payor detailing amount paid and what it was for	<input type="checkbox"/>
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ANNEX 4

Pacific Immigration Development Community

Trip Report

¹ Original unused coupons are to be provided to the respective DA to claim from the travel agent. You should indicate on the copy of the unused coupon when the amount was submitted for refund

Meeting Title	
Travel Period	
Meeting Location	
Agency/Organisation inviting PIDC	
How did the Secretariat become aware of this forum	
Other Attendees	
Is PIDC's attendance funded or are we to be self-funded?	
Purpose/Objective/Outcome of meeting	
What is the background to this invitation?	
Key Outcomes achieved	

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