



TRAVEL TIDBITS

Requesting Premium Class Airfare Approval

Premium Class Airfare must be approved by headquarters prior to submitting the authorization. Premium Class is defined as 'premium economy,' 'upgraded economy,' 'business class,' and 'first class.'

Flight Times Over 14 Hours:

When requesting approval for the use of Premium Class Airfare for flights over 14 hours, the following documents must be completed and submitted to FMAD-Travel@ars.usda.gov :

1. Completed Employee Checklist for Premium Class Travel
2. AMemo from the Area Director, through the Chief Financial Officer (Robert Magill) to the Acting Undersecretary (Chavonda Jacobs-Young). The memo must include the cost of the economy coach fare, the cost of the premium class fare requested.
3. A copy of the flight itinerary.

Copies of the Premium Travel Checklist and memo template are attached.

Medical Accommodation:

If approval is needed to accommodate a medical disability, a letter from the ARS Reasonable Accommodation Specialist will be needed to support the use of Premium Class based on the traveler's medical condition along with the Employee Checklist for Premium Class Airfare.

Should you have questions or need assistance, please contact your Travel Specialist.

Employee Checklist for Premium (First and Business) Class Travel

Traveler Name (print or type): _____

- 1. Is Premium Class Travel required to accommodate a disability or special need?** Yes No
- Was medical documentation provided to appropriate agency approver?** Yes No
- Does the documentation require premium class instead of two coach seats?** Yes No
- Is the documentation dated within the last 6 months or indicate a permanent disability?** Yes No
- Did the appropriate agency approver provide a statement certifying they reviewed the documentation and that premium class travel is required?** Yes No

If you answered yes to all questions in this section, attach the agency approver certification to the back of this checklist and the approval form. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer (Normally an Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary) approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section, continue to the next section.

- 2. Is the flight (including layovers less than ten hours) over 14 hours?** Yes No
- Is the flight (start, finish or both) outside of the continental United States?** Yes No
- Will the traveler report for duty within 23 hours of landing?** Yes No
- Will the traveler perform significant work after reporting for duty?** Yes No

Justification is available for business class requests only. If you answered yes to all questions in this section, attach the following documentation to the back of this checklist and the approval form:

- flight itinerary showing flight times, layovers and a total trip cost; and
- documentation showing you will report for significant work within ten hours of landing. Significant work is defined as a meeting with non-USDA staff where USDA cannot control the schedule **OR** work lasting more than four hours.

Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section, continue to the next section.

- 3. Are coach seats not available?** Yes No
- Do you have documentation (system screen print or travel agent's written certification) of no coach seats?** Yes No
- Have you fully explained (in writing – email or note to the file is acceptable) why the trip cannot be delayed until coach seats are available?** Yes No
- If requesting first class, do you have a travel agent's certification that no business or coach seating is available for at least 24 hours?** Yes No

If you answered yes to all questions in this section, attach the documentation to the back of this checklist and approval form. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section, continue to the next section.

4. Is business class travel cheaper than coach? Yes No

Has a cost comparison been completed? Yes No

Justification is available for business class requests only. If you answered yes to all questions in this section, attach the documentation to the back of this checklist and approval form. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section, continue to the next section.

5. Does the flight only offer premium class travel? Yes No

Do you have a statement from the travel agent or airline documenting that only premium class travel is offered? Yes No

Do you have documentation from the airline website indicating that only premium class travel is offered? Yes No

Justification is available for business class requests only. If you answered yes to all questions in this section, attach the documentation to the back of this checklist and approval form. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section, continue to the next section.

6. Is premium class required for security reasons? Yes No

If you answered yes, attach documentation to the back of this checklist and approval form describing the security situation and why it requires premium class travel. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section, continue to the next section.

7a. Are there other exceptional circumstances? Yes No

Is a Non-Federal Source funding the travel? Yes No

Has this been approved by the Office of Ethics or an Ethics Officer? Yes No

Justification is available for business class requests only. If you answered yes to all questions in this section (7.a), attach the documentation to the back of this checklist and approval form. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section (7.a), continue to the next section.

7b. Is premium class needed due to sanitation issues (international travel only)? Yes No

Have the flight's sanitation issues been fully documented in writing? Yes No

Justification is available for business class requests only. If you answered yes to all questions in this section (7.b), attach the documentation to the back of this checklist and approval form. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval. If you answered no to any of the questions in this section (7.b), continue to the next section.

7c. Is premium class travel needed to support the agency's mission? Yes No

Has a detailed explanation of why the agency mission cannot be completed using coach seating been prepared for management's review? Yes No

If you answered yes to all questions in this section (7.c), attach the documentation to the back of this checklist and approval form. Skip to the bottom of the employee checklist to sign and date the certification statement. Follow your agency's procedures to obtain General Officer approval.

If you answered NO in all of the sections above, you do not qualify for premium (first and business) class travel. No special approvals are necessary. Please submit your travel authorization for coach class arrangements to your normal approving official for review.

Certification: I certify that the premium class travel requested is in the Government's best interest and are for the purpose(s) indicated. I understand that Premium class (first or business class) travel is not an entitlement and that I must comply with the Department's procedures for requesting premium (first or business) class accommodations. I will provide additional documentation, including medical certification, if required. I also understand that the falsification of information on this form may be grounds for disciplinary action, including removal.

Traveler: _____
Signature

Date

Department of Agriculture Approval Form for Premium (First and Business) Class Travel

Agency: _____ Traveler's Name: _____ Travel Dates: _____

No.	Class of Travel	Description	Documentation Required
1.	Business <input type="checkbox"/> First <input type="checkbox"/>	Use of premium class is required to accommodate a disability or special need.	Disability must be sustained in writing by a medical authority and provided to supervisor; supervisor must certify that travel, in other than coach, class is required; must be dated within the prior six months of travel (or indicates a permanent disability); and documented that the disability cannot be accommodated using a cheaper alternative method of travel (i.e., two coach seats).
2.	Business <input type="checkbox"/>	Where the origin and/or destination are outside the continental United States (OCONUS), and the scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours. (Rest periods may not be taken during or immediately following the flight.)	Documentation of flight time; the need for business class; and traveler's schedule showing the traveler reporting for duty immediately following the flight with no rest period.
3.	Business <input type="checkbox"/> First <input type="checkbox"/>	No space is available in coach class accommodations in time to accomplish mission, which is urgent and cannot be postponed.	Supporting documentation to be provided, i.e. screen prints or certification from the Travel Management Center; explanation of why the flight is so urgent; and the day/time traveler is reporting for duty upon arrival.
4.	Business <input type="checkbox"/>	Use of business class results in cost savings to the Government.	A cost comparison must be provided showing the savings to the Government.
5.	Business <input type="checkbox"/>	Regularly scheduled flights only provide premium class accommodations.	Documentation to be provided indicating that no coach seating is offered on that flight and an alternative flight is not available, i.e., screen prints or certification from the Travel Management Center.
6.	Business <input type="checkbox"/> First <input type="checkbox"/>	Security.	Explanation of the security issue.
7.	Business <input type="checkbox"/> First <input type="checkbox"/>	Exceptional Circumstances. Non-Federal Source (business only) <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitation Issues (business only) <input type="checkbox"/> Agency Mission (first or business) <input type="checkbox"/>	Full documentation of the exceptional circumstances, which includes Federal Travel Regulation justifications for foreign flight sanitation, payment from a non-Federal source, and mission criteria.

General Officer Reviewing Request (print name) _____

Approved: Denied:

Approving Official: _____
Signature Date

Instructions for Requesting the Use of Premium (First and Business) Class Travel

1. The traveler must complete both forms (Employee Checklist and Approval Form).
2. The traveler must sign the Employee Checklist, attach all required documentation to the back of the checklist and scan the package into the ConcurGov authorization.
3. A hard copy of the completed Approval Form and Employee Checklist package (checklist and documentation) must be provided to the traveler's General Officer (usually Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary) for review and approval.



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, & ECONOMICS UNDER SECRETARY

SUBJECT: Request for Approval of Premium Air Accommodations for (Traveler Name)

TO: (Name of Under Secretary)
REE Under Secretary

THROUGH: Robert Magill
Chief Financial Officer

FROM: (Name of Area Director)
Director, (Area)

ISSUE/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Office of the _____ is seeking approval of a round trip business class air ticket for _____. (Traveler's name) will be traveling to (location) on (date) to attend the (name of meeting). The purpose of the meeting is to _____.

Option 1: A fully refundable business class fare for the outbound flight (Departing airport or location to Destination) and inbound flight (Destination(s)), with all (Airline Name) segments in business class is (\$_____ total round trip cost).

The traveler is currently ticketed in economy class at a cost of \$_____ roundtrip.

Option 2: The non- refundable coach-class contract carrier cost is \$_____.

All prices were obtained directly from BCD Travel, a booking agency for ARS.

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Because this travel is deemed important to the mission of U. S. Department of Agriculture and ARS, it is requested that approval for business class travel in “Option 2” is granted. This trip meets the FTR 301-10.125 14-hour rule to travel via other than coach-class. If you approve, please sign below and return this memorandum to FMAD-Travel@ars.usda.gov, so the traveler may be notified and appropriate airline reservations completed.

BACKGROUND:

This request is being made due to FTR 301-10.125 14-hour rule to travel via other than coach-class when: The origin and/or destination are OCONUS; the scheduled flight time, including non-overnight stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours; and you are required to report to duty the following day or sooner.

DECISION BY THE REE UNDERSECRETARY:

Approve: _____

Disapprove: _____

Discuss with me: _____

Date: _____

Enclosure(s)

Approval Form for Premium (First and Business) Class Travel
Employee Checklist for Premium (First and Business) Class Travel
Employee’s Travel Itinerary

- Completed Employee Checklist for Premium Class Travel
- Memo from the Area Director, through the Chief Financial Officer (Robert Magill) to the Acting Undersecretary (Chavonda Jacobs-Young). The memo must include the cost of the economy coach fare, the cost of the premium class fare requested.
- A copy of the flight itinerary