

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE TRAVEL POLICY:

# How to Maximise Value from Your Travel Program

**Agility and cost management are crucial for businesses to stay competitive, now more than ever. A thoughtfully developed corporate travel program is not merely necessary but a strategic asset serving both business travellers and finance teams.**

This guide will provide a blueprint to enhance your organisation's operational efficiency, boost cost-effectiveness, and enrich the travel experience. Here, we reveal the key elements that transform a standard business travel program into a powerful tool for operational success.



# Why a Corporate Travel Policy is Important?

Corporate travel managers encounter multiple obstacles while creating and implementing travel programs, particularly when overseeing wet and dry leased fleets.

Their work plays a crucial role in the success of their organisation, and it all starts with developing an effective business travel policy. Using technology, policies can be integrated into a complete travel program, ensuring a smooth travel experience for everyone involved, from employees to operations.

So, what exactly is a corporate travel policy? And how can you create one for your business that gains universal adherence, improves the passenger experience, and reduces costs? Follow on and dive into the fundamentals, benefits, and best practices for creating and tracking these policies effectively.





## The What and Why of Business Travel Policies

**Business travellers need comprehensive guidelines that outline their organisation's rules and regulations for business travel approval, including quotas and penalties for booking arrangements for staff and families. It serves as a standardised framework for cost-effective, safe, and compliant business travel.**

Corporate travel policies are created to encourage good travel behaviour among employees. They establish transparency in the booking process and build trust and accountability. In order to work effectively, though, policies must be combined with systems and audit trail records that guide every detail of the travel booking process, with exception management rules to redress issues quickly. These measures ensure responsible and efficient professional travel.

Creating a corporate travel policy for your business brings numerous advantages, not just for your company's bottom line but also for your travellers. Consider the benefits of both.

# 1

## A Better Experience for Travelers

Travellers hesitate to use a system that complicates their already packed agenda. A well-defined travel policy ensures convenience, compliance with company regulations and external guidelines, and addresses the growing demand for efficient, secure, and comprehensive travel solutions.

**Clarity:** Well-defined travel policies ensure employees have a clear understanding of the booking process, reducing the possibility of confusion or misunderstandings.

**Convenience:** Streamlined travel policies save time by providing a cohesive and practical guide for employees to follow. No more guessing on what expenses to include, how to book flights or accommodations, or how to arrange transportation.

**Compliance:** Travel policies help employees comply with company regulations and other relevant guidelines (such as government or union), thus avoiding penalties and compliance issues.

**Integration:** In the past, commercial travel was often unreliable and complicated. There is now a growing demand for solutions that link varied resources and effortlessly apply multiple travel policies in one secure platform or central hub for ease of use.



# 2

## Improved Agility and Reduced Costs for the Company

A well-crafted travel policy not only benefits employees and travellers but also helps organisations with:

**Cost Control:** An effective travel policy curtails unnecessary expenses and determines suitable limits for approved travel costs, providing the company with a better handle on its budget. Benchmarking and regular policy reviews also help ensure that best practices are being followed over time.

**Administrative efficiency:** A standardised and easily accessible process for travel approval, bookings, and expense management streamlines the entire travel experience. This reduces the administrative burden on both workers and management.

**Business travel risk management:** Travel policies serve as a roadmap for reliably addressing safety concerns and can simplify the process of dealing with unforeseen emergencies during travel. Support staff need access to information, but only what's necessary to their position. For example, contracted security staff should not be able to access future travel manifests due to abduction risks for staff and VIPs. Whereas a passenger who is denied access to the airport because their late booking hasn't reached a manifest needs that information shared only with staff that can facilitate their entry.



Ultimately, a corporate travel policy helps ensure that all business trips are carried out in a consistent, efficient way throughout your company. This reduces the risk of booking bad or costly travel arrangements, and also improves your team's experience, including that of front, mid- and back-office.



**What should a  
corporate travel  
policy include?**



For a well-rounded corporate travel policy, American Express Global Business Travel provides **four best practices** for effective company travel policies. **First**, cover all elements of the traveller's trip in a comprehensive policy. **Second**, communicate the policy effectively, particularly with senior management where succession issues and new policy implementation can create policy incompatibilities that quickly turn a growing system into one in decline. **Third**, fine-tune and improve the policy using detailed travel metrics. **Lastly**, equip the policy to handle urgent situations and uphold duty-of-care obligations.

## Therefore, the key elements of a successful corporate travel policy include:

- 1 Travel Approval Process:** Outline processes and protocols for arranging and approving business travel, for leased and commercial domestic and international trips.
- 2 Expense Guidelines:** Define what constitutes approved travel expenses and when rates change due to duration. For example, an employee may be expected to leave a hotel after staying six months and switch to a more economical apartment. Airfare, lodging, ferries, ground transportation and meals all require specific quotas and guidelines for reimbursement. And remember to set terms for how annual allowances (like danger money) are managed.
- 3 Safety & Security:** Create a framework and communication system for addressing potential risks and emergencies that may arise during trips.
- 4 Sustainability:** Encourage environmentally friendly choices during business travel, when possible, to demonstrate your company's commitment to social responsibility.
- 5 Communication & Involvement of Senior Management:** Clearly communicate the policy requirements to all personnel involved in the process, and involve senior management in monitoring policy compliance.
- 6 Use Detailed Travel Metrics:** Track booking data to review areas where savings can be realised or policies can be improved upon over time.

- 7 Duty-of-Care Obligations:** Establish a framework that outlines responsibilities to manage any urgent situations or issues related to traveller safety while on the road. Enterprise-level policies could include executive travel rules prohibiting two executives from travelling on the same plane. The company then would not be left without key personnel if there was an incident or accident involving injuries or fatalities.
- 8 Credential Management:** Securely govern travel bookings for staff and dependents that have continually shifting roles and locations, while also maintaining different travel privileges that account for conflicting attributes. Use a system that automatically updates this information daily from SAP instead of cumbersome manually edited records.
- 9 Penalties & Quotas:** Clear penalties and quotas incentivize adherence to the policy. Consequences for late cancellations, no-shows, or non-compliant expenses maintain fiscal discipline within the organisation.
- 10 Technology:** Use the latest technologies like auto-scaled database power, along with careful production management, to provide credential management that enables complex corporate travel requirements. A new feature available at UnityTrip is Cosmos burst mode, which utilises any unused load credit to handle spikes in demand with triple power for a limited time. Older software packages are unable to handle these complexities.

Following these practices results in increased savings, greater control, and better management of travel programs.

**Once key elements are established, the following steps will ensure that you build and maintain customised travel policies for your enterprise.**



**Step 1:**

# **Determine Travel Needs and Budget**



One of the first steps in building a successful corporate travel policy is determining your company's travel needs and budget allocations. To do this effectively, consider both the quantity and quality of each trip. Evaluate the number of trips that will be taken in a given year, the duration and frequency of those trips, and what types of accommodations and transportation will be used.

Once you have these details, you can then allocate an appropriate budget that aligns with your company's goals.

**Understand how your enterprise can save inside your corporate travel program while meeting your unique requirements. We'll ask you a few questions to get started.**

Step 2:

**Consider  
the Needs  
of Different  
Stakeholders  
and Business  
Requirements**

The stakeholders involved in corporate travel management can vary depending on the organisation and its specific travel program. As a corporate travel manager in charge of policy development, you'll want to consider the needs of each group. Here are some examples of stakeholders that may be involved:

- 1 Company Executives:** Senior leaders in the organisation may have a stake in the company's travel program as it affects its finances and operations.
- 2 Travel Managers and Coordinators:** These individuals are responsible for managing the travel program and ensuring that it aligns with company goals and policies.
- 3 Finance Department:** The finance department is often responsible for managing the financial aspects of the travel program, including setting budgets, approving expenses, and analysing travel-related costs.
- 4 Human Resources Department:** The HR department may be involved in developing and implementing travel policies related to employee safety, health, and well-being.
- 5 IT Department:** The IT department may be involved in managing the technology systems used to book travel and track expenses.
- 6 Suppliers:** Suppliers such as airlines, hotels, and automobile rental companies may have a stake in the travel program as it affects their business.
- 7 Families:** The families of employees who travel may have a stake in the travel program, as it affects the safety, well-being, and work-life balance of their loved ones.
- 8 Employee Unions:** Unions may have a stake in the travel program if it affects employee working conditions or if it is included in collective bargaining agreements.
- 9 Support staff:** Staff may have a stake in the travel program since they are often tasked with booking travel on behalf of others within the company.

**Step 3:**

# **Establish Guidelines for Booking Travel**

Business travel is an essential part of many companies' operations and can have a big impact on their overall budget. A comprehensive corporate travel policy should be in place to ensure that employees are able to complete their tasks and duties safely, efficiently, and within the company's budgetary constraints.

Policies must outline rules for air travel, hotels and lodging, ground transportation, and other things. This includes providing guidelines such as when to use economy versus business class flights, or stating how far in advance reservations must be made.



Spending guidelines for on-the-job expenses such as meals and phone calls need to be included so that staff remains compliant with their policies.

Finally, ensuring staff safety while they are on the go is of utmost importance, so security measures should also be taken into account. Consider including tips regarding personal safety in your policy, as well as secure management of important documents or materials during international trips. Each individual point may not seem consequential. However, considering these details will help you create an effective travel policy that eliminates problems before they arise.



# Examples for What to Include in Corporate Travel Policies



## Air Travel

Creating an effective air travel policy for employees is important in controlling costs and helping to maintain safety. A clear set of guidelines should be set out prior to any business trip, not only to ensure that bookings are compliant but also to ensure that all the necessary information is included when submitting expense forms. The policy should detail which airlines the company prefers and also include a list of approved in-flight purchases, including items such as snacks, meals, and entertainment options.

When setting up an air travel policy, two areas of contention are common: regulations around booking business class vs. economy and the rules around using business frequent flyer miles for personal use. To ensure fairness and consistency across your enterprise, it is essential to clearly define the company's stance on these issues within the policy itself. This way, travellers are made aware of restrictions and limits before going on their trip, avoiding potential problems or misunderstandings at a later date.

## No-shows

An effective corporate travel policy addresses last-minute cancellations and no-shows, captures the reasons, and details any consequences. No-shows lead to a reduction in asset utilisation and deny seats to other travellers. Consequently, travel privileges for staff who repeatedly no-show may temporarily be suspended. However, the aim is not to prevent essential travel for things like groceries, school, and family appointments. Rather, it is to hold the booker responsible for their actions with some inconvenience. To avoid being banned, staff who cannot fulfil their booking procedure can ask a friend to use their excess quota to book on their behalf or call support for assistance.





## Go-shows

Go-shows are last-minute opportunities for prepared travellers to take advantage of cancellations or sudden openings. Go-shows are not limited to air travel but are also an opportune way to fill seats on ferries and buses or fill guesthouse rooms. Filling empty travel assets requires up-to-the-minute logistics that older systems don't have the capability to provide. Go-show arrangements are a convenient option for travellers with unexpected changes in their travel plans while optimising available booking space.

## Hotels & Lodging

When it comes to corporate lodging policies, organisations should ensure that rules and regulations are clearly laid out for all employees. However, different levels of accommodation are often necessary for different staff members. For example, high-level executives may require luxury accommodations with meeting facilities, which is unsuitable for workers who only visit for technical purposes. Identity verification is essential for ensuring that accommodations are properly assigned.

Generally, organisations set a maximum hotel star rating or nightly/room rate that employees cannot exceed when booking accommodation for corporate trips. In addition, most companies usually require employees to stay in standard hotel rooms without the option of upgraded rooms or suites.

When setting limits for lodging expenses, it is important to clarify which incidentals your policy will cover. Reimbursable items to consider include room service, laundry services, valet parking and any hotel amenities such as pools and gyms.





## Managing Company Guesthouses

If you are managing your own corporate guesthouses with a system like [ElinaPMS](#), you'll want to prioritise safety and comfort when setting policies for your employees. This could include ensuring staff are aware of check-in/check-out times, giving a clear list of amenities, and providing instructions in the event of an emergency. Careful attention must also be paid to existing fire codes and security measures such as lockable doors and windows.

By making these details explicit in your corporate travel policy, you can ensure that employees use only approved facilities and remain within budget limits.

## Ground Transportation

Corporate travel policies can stipulate that if two employees are travelling to the same location, they must drive together in one vehicle, eliminating the need for two rental bookings. Sharing a ride is an efficient and cost-effective way for employees to get to their destinations. By sharing a ride, both parties can save on costs such as gas, tolls, and parking fees.

Rideshare also helps reduce traffic congestion during peak hours. Additionally, it reduces emission pollution, which is beneficial for both our health and the planet's health. Finally, commuting together encourages social interaction among co-workers which strengthens team morale within the organisation.



Step 4:

# Set Policies for Unique Business Requirements

Corporate requirements, like the number of people who can travel together or the acceptable form of ground transportation, can be set to support desired business outcomes. For example, some companies may limit the number of executive travellers to only two per trip; others may require that all employees take ride-sharing services instead of chauffeur-driven options. Specific limits may be set on acceptable meal expenses and even restrict certain types of entertainment-related activities while travelling. These policies help ensure that the company is not spending excessively on business travel and keeps costs low.

## Consider the Needs of Different Departments and Travelers

**When creating a corporate travel policy, it is important to consider the needs of all stakeholders, including different departments and travellers.** Different departments may have different requirements or preferences that need to be taken into account. For instance, your company may choose to prohibit executives from travelling on the same plane to minimise the possibility of catastrophic company loss.



**Step 5:**

**Communicate  
the Policy Clearly  
to All Employees**



A well-defined travel policy is essential to ensure your organisation realises the maximum value from its travel program. However, it's not enough to simply have the policy in place. Policies must also be effectively communicated to everyone in the organisation. When employees are aware of the travel policies and procedures, they can make informed decisions about their business travels, which again reduces expenses and increases efficiency.

One of the best ways to communicate your travel policy is to ensure it is easily accessible. Publish the policy in a document or company website page, or create an intranet page dedicated to travel policies and procedures. An even more future-proof approach would be to deploy a corporate travel app that connects all your staff, systems, and suppliers.

**Use the latest in technology to get your travel systems and suppliers in one app. We'll ask you a few questions to get started.**

No matter how you decide to do it, ensure that all employees are aware of your company's travel expectations. Encourage employees to ask questions about any confusing aspects of the policy. This will help ensure everyone knows what is expected of them when travelling for business.

Step 6:

**Monitor and  
Evaluate the  
Policy Regularly**



A successful corporate travel policy requires regular monitoring and evaluation in order to maximise value for the organisation. Monitoring involves tracking spending, identifying trends in behaviour, and understanding how the policy is being used.

It is important to review any changes made since the last review and determine whether they are indeed having a positive impact on the program.

At a minimum, evaluations need to occur annually since annual quotas reset on the first of January each year. Assessments include benchmarking against other companies, evaluating customer satisfaction surveys and understanding if the policy is helping the company achieve strategic objectives. It is also important to review any areas of risk and determine if additional controls are needed to protect the organisation from potential liability or financial losses.

# Streamline Your Corporate Travel Management System Using UnityTrip

Developing a top-notch corporate travel policy is only half of the picture. To truly harness its potential, meticulous organisation and comprehensive tracking of all travel-related activities throughout the fiscal year are essential. Leveraging advanced technology not only enhances efficiency but also plays a critical role in cost management.

Consider using competing travel management companies [TMC] and a self-service booking tool to streamline the process and save time. A rule of thumb is that the technology and the TMC should be provided by different suppliers. This separation allows for ease of swapping out the TMC if they lack content or change priorities compared to what the client has come to rely on for their operations.

Using fleet management software, apps or third-party services that specialise in travel expense tracking and reporting is far more practical than a pen-and-paper approach. Streamlined processes minimise delays, reduce costs, and keep all relevant stakeholders informed.





## What is a Travel Management System and what can it do?

A travel management system uses software to streamline booking, analytics, and reporting for enterprise-level travel programs. Automation is key to achieving greater control over travel programs and improving operations as it comprehensively tracks and reports all business trip details in real time.

Advanced technology is required to deploy these complex operations, particularly when scheduling between private or leased transport assets and commercial content.

Effective tracking allows for reliable analytics, transparent reporting, and the ability to respond with informed policy adjustments as needed. A travel management system that incorporates your company's unique travel policy creates a seamless booking experience that takes into account exceptions, complicated logistics, and tiered penalties to facilitate employee adoption.

Automation is crucial to achieving such goals, especially for private or leased transport assets or hub-less networks. For instance, since passengers don't pay for business travel, corporate travel policies must come with penalties for late cancellations, reschedules, and no-shows that deny other business travellers the opportunity to travel.

However, a travel management system is also tasked with identifying the appropriate employee to penalise rather than the administrative team that may have booked the travel for an executive. These are complicated matters that require a robust suite of advanced technologies.



**A travel management system requires leading edge software to allow for improved tracking, analytics, and reporting.**

A travel management system like UnityTrip can help your company improve operations with an efficient approach that relies on technology that you control and comprehensive tracking of all trips taken by business travellers.

# UnityTrip Improves Travel Operations



## Easily identify who is travelling

Integrating your company's travel policy into an automated system requires accurately identifying the travelling personnel or family members and ensuring the information is consistently maintained across various systems.

## Collect reason for travels

Gain greater control over your corporate travel program by systematically collecting the reason for the trip. Trip reasons, in combination with the traveller's corporate identity, determine their eligibility for travel.



## Define and restrict booking options

Based on your corporate travel policy, travel management software controls what content can be booked, when, and for whom. You can also create rules and restrictions for specific types of travellers like VIPs, contractors, or interns.



## Automate payments, expenses and refunds

Automated systems make it simple to reimburse travellers for their expenses and provide refunds when needed. Automated payments streamline the process, ensuring all travellers receive reimbursement quickly and accurately. One exclusive benefit of using UnityTrip for business travellers is that it allows for penalties and quotas to enforce good traveller behaviour. So, even though business travellers are not personally paying out of pocket, they are incentivized to avoid exploiting the system's convenience. Some companies may even choose to run their own virtual credit card programs.

## Enforce penalties

To encourage good travel behaviour, penalty points are assigned to the traveller when no-shows, cancellations, or changes are made to travel plans. Penalties are calculated using the departure date, and the number of penalty points assigned depends on the event and the time before departure. A significant number of accumulated points can trigger a ban for a duration of time. But there are some cases where the reason for the trip would bypass penalties. For instance, a factory shutdown, a last-minute business requirement, or medical booking are flexible circumstances requiring a powerful system to implement.

A comprehensive travel policy allows for workaround solutions. For instance, once a booker's account has been banned due to too many penalty points, another corporate traveller may be assigned to book on their behalf. As a result, the booker is incentivised to improve travel behaviour, which increases the company's culture.

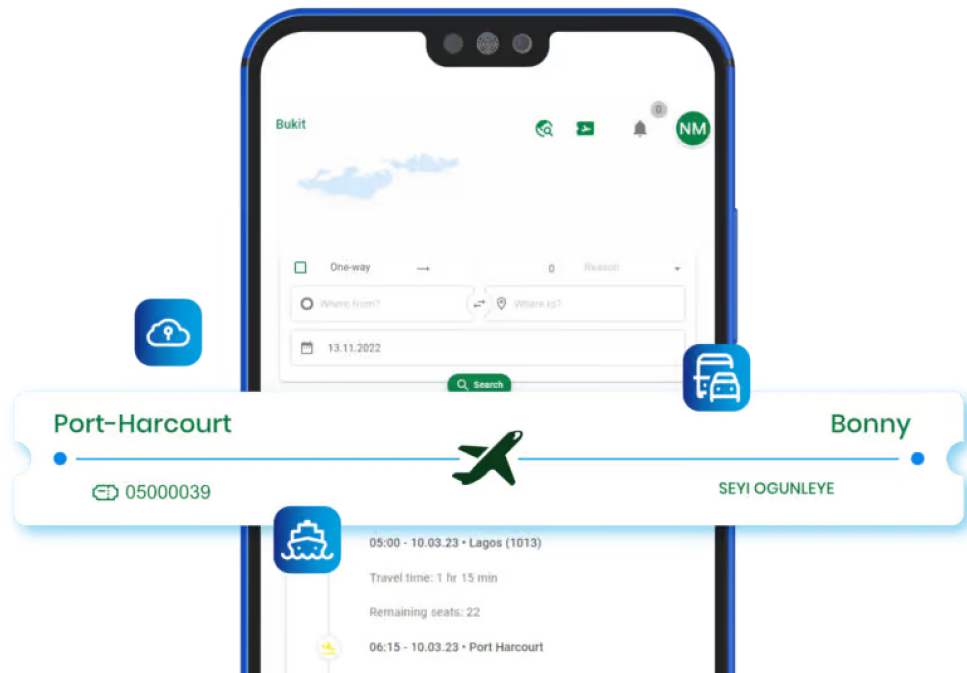




## Integrate with other software

Since corporate travel needs are immense and varied, integration becomes a must. All supplier platforms, payment gateways, and expense management solutions need to reference each other and stay in sync without support overhead to prevent internal conflicts.

The right travel software in place uncomplicates your business travel policy, making it easier to implement and maintain. Remember, as your business expands, your travel policy may change as well, so be prepared with tools in place that can adapt and grow with you.



## How to Unify Your Travel Systems, Suppliers and Travel Desk

Clear company travel policies encourage good traveller behaviour and compliance. UnityTrip is a software tool that provides customised travel booking and management, aligning vendors, policies, and operations in one central white-labelled hub.

Use it to monitor quotas like union-agreed employment travel benefits for school, groceries, and rest or recreation. Create penalties like suspending travel benefits for employees who have done too many late reschedules or cancellations so that others aren't denied travel inventory and the ability to board.

# Final Thoughts on Corporate Travel Policy Best Practices



A corporate travel policy is essential for organisations to maximise value from their travel program and ensure the safety and security of their employees. When establishing a travel policy, some best practices should be followed to ensure it meets the needs of your organisation and travellers:

- 1 Evaluate Travel Needs and Budgets:** Establish guidelines for evaluating travel expenses and reimbursements to ensure cost savings are realised.
- 2 Consider Stakeholder Requirements:** Ensure various stakeholders' travel needs are taken into consideration, as they are often quite different.
- 3 Establish Clear Guidelines:** Set general expectations when travelling on behalf of the organisation. This includes company travel best practices, preferred modes of transportation, preferred airline carriers and hotels.
- 4 Set Policies:** Provide comprehensive details so the guidelines have more structure and desired business outcomes are facilitated. This includes booking procedures, spending limits, if staff travel together, safety protocols, and any sanctions for violations.
- 5 Communicate the Policy:** Ensure that all employees are aware of the travel policy and its guidelines so that compliance is easy.
- 6 Monitor Regularly:** Review the travel policy at least once per year and update it as needed to reflect current market pricing, vendor preferences, quota analysis, and other considerations. Track bookings, expense reports, flight manifests, or corporate credit card programs.

Whether you're a titan of industry or a scrappy startup, a well-crafted corporate travel policy can help you gain control over travel budgets while significantly reducing the stress surrounding business travel.

**Streamline your corporate travel program with innovative technology, all accessible from the convenience of your mobile device. Book a demo now to experience the power of our white-labelled travel hub.**

# Common Questions about Travel Policies

## 1 What is an executive travel policy?

An executive travel policy is **a document that outlines the rules and regulations related to business travel**. It includes information on who is eligible to travel, what kind of expenses can be covered, where they can stay, and how transportation should be arranged. The policy also includes guidelines on how to book flights, hotels, car rentals, and other services associated with business travel. Additionally, the executive travel policy outlines penalties that may be imposed for too many last minute changes. An executive travel policy is usually prepaid and needs to be much more flexible than a standard travel policy.

## 2 What is a standard travel policy?

A standard travel policy is **a set of rules, regulations and guidelines that govern how employees are allowed to conduct business travel**. It sets forth the expectations for employee behaviour when travelling for work purposes – from booking flights and accommodations to claiming expenses.

## 3 How can technology change business travel?

Technology helps enterprise clients optimise the rules, regulations, and identify exceptional circumstances within their corporate travel policies. Advancements in AI and cloud technology have made it easier for companies to manage their travel programs across owned/leased and commercial content, track spending, and keep employees safe while travelling for business.

Additionally, technology makes it possible to reduce expenses by allowing companies to book flights, hotels, and rental vehicles from preferred suppliers at lower rates or using their own private assets. Travellers can access real-time information about flight delays, and Operations can access real-time data for cost analysis and so they can respond accordingly. Large companies are complicated, but employing technology for business travel isn't.



**Thank you!**