



STATE OF WASHINGTON

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TO: Agency Directors

FROM: K.D. Chapman-See
Director

SUBJECT: CLARIFICATION ON TRAVEL FREEZE IMPLEMENTATION RELATED TO TRIBAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In response to recent feedback and questions related to the implementation of [Governor's Directive 24-19](#), I am writing to clarify guidance regarding exemptions to the current travel freeze, specifically as it relates to tribal relations, community outreach, and statutory obligations under the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act.

As outlined in the directive and [OFM's implementation instructions](#) issued December 9, 2024, the freeze on state travel does not apply to travel that is:

- Essential to the responsibilities of a position;
- Necessary to protect life or public safety;
- Related to tax collection or other revenue-generating activities;
- Funded exclusively by private or federal grants.

This means that if travel is an essential part of an employee's duties — such as engaging with tribes, meeting statutory obligations under the HEAL Act, or conducting community outreach — *it is exempt from the freeze and does not require OFM approval or reporting*. Agencies should continue to track and monitor *all* travel whether it is exempt from the freeze or an exception to the freeze is granted by the agency director.

Authentic, ongoing, and reciprocal engagement with communities — especially those most impacted by environmental and health disparities — is foundational to meeting our equity commitments and requirements of the HEAL Act. In-person attendance at community and tribal events should be treated as a core function of engagement of staff roles. For example, outreach workers traveling to districts to engage with community members as part of program delivery responsibilities fall squarely within this exemption. Of course, virtual engagement can occur if preferred by tribes and communities.

For other travel that does not fall within the parameters bulleted above, agency directors continue to have the authority to approve exceptions to the travel freeze when the travel is determined to be critical to an agency's statutory responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to, other travel required by the HEAL Act, such as ongoing community engagement and tribal consultation. If an agency determines that in-person engagement is essential for culturally responsive communication, equitable access, or the successful implementation of environmental justice strategies, the agency director may approve that travel as an exception.

Finally, while the freeze applies to discretionary travel and other spending categories, it does not restrict accessibility services required for equitable community engagement. Agencies should continue to provide interpretation, translation, closed captioning, and other services required by law and that align with our core values. These efforts ensure access to programs and services for all Washingtonians and should not be deprioritized during periods of budget constraint.

Thank you for your continued leadership and stewardship in this time of fiscal responsibility. Please direct any questions about travel exemptions or exceptions to ofm.administration@ofm.wa.gov.