Cash Advance How To ☺

There are a number of reasons we get cash advances before traveling. It is hard to track expenses during the trip, most countries are cash based, conventional receipts are not always an option-which makes trying to just get reimbursed after the trip a less than ideal option and is a big pain for the accountants. To procure a cash advance, there are a few things you need know before going to the department accountants (historically we have gone to the Civil Engineering Department).

1) How much money you need – previous trips are a great resource for getting estimates, but it is good practice to include a safety factor no matter how great your estimates are
2) A breakdown of your budget – This is what is put onto the employee expense form (UM 1612) in the expense cells.
3) Basic information about the trip – What country you are going to, what currency they use, how many people are traveling, **first and last names of everyone traveling**
4) Exact travel dates – you should begin the cash advance process at least a month before leaving the country
5) A rational as to why the department should give you all this money – for example, the country of travel has a cash based economy, conventional receipts are not always available. Please also include what your team will be doing in the country.

3), 4) & 5) are filled out in the justification portion of the employee expense form (UM1612)

6) The person taking out the cash advance needs to be a University employee – the money for the cash advance is deposited in that person's account via the U's payment system for their employees
7) Whoever takes out the cash advance is responsible (in the end) for getting receipts and money back to the department – if the advance is not reconciled the U will take all the money it deposited in your account back, and you probably do not want that to happen.

Amy Jones – aejones@umn.edu or Ryan Enselein – ensel003@umn.edu – will be your contacts when submitting the cash advance. To get a cash advance you will want to contact them, or someone else in the accounting department, about getting the paperwork to start the cash advance process. You will have to fill out the form and then return it to the accountants to be approved. Once it is approved you will sign away your soul (not really) and then in a few business days the cash advance should be deposited into your account. If it does not show up after a few days contact Amy Jones or Ryan Enselein, in the accounting office and they should be able to help you out.

After you have the cash advance it is important to keep VERY good track of all expenses you have in country – remember, if the advance is not reconciled you will be paying for it out of your own pocket. The accounting department has a template that is really nice for keeping track of expenses. For occasions when receipts are not offered you can provide your own, the accounting office will provide you with a receipt book. Either way it is important to include the date, what was paid for, and the signature of the other person. Keep track of all expenses and receipts!

A couple of helpful hints

1) Wait until you are back in the states to number the receipts

2) Bring waterproof bags (ex. Ziploc) and paper clips/rubber bands to keep your receipts and $$ dry and organized
3) **Try to update the reconciliation worksheet every day, it will make your life 10 times easier and help you keep track of your funds**
4) Be subtle about how much money you are carrying around – it's probably a lot more than you are used to carrying around, but the whole world doesn't need to know that
5) Do your best to work with the accountants and make their job easy – they are a big help to EWB, and besides it just being common courtesy we want to stay on their good side, cash advances can be a lot of work for them
6) If you receive money from community contributions, or reselling of excess supplies let the accountants know, it can throw a big wrench in your reconciliation if not properly dealt with on the forms – make a receipt for this as well
7) Follow the instructions on the reconciliation worksheets
8) The U won't take any currency, foreign or domestic, only checks, so try and reconvert everything back to USD or something your back will accept when all is said and done in order to not lose money at the reconciliation stage – keep track of the conversion rates that are used, both on the 1st day and when leaving

Once you get back from the trip it is time to reconcile with the accountants. The sooner you get started the better, since if it's not done within a month of your return the U will come and collect. The Excel spreadsheet is probably the best way to go; you can just transfer your paper records to the spreadsheet and email it to the accountants and work out any discrepancies from there. Be sure to include all expenses, regardless if you have receipts. For the inevitable transactions without receipts there is a form for that, the statement in lieu of receipt form to be exact.