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# TRAVEL PROCEDURES

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## Travel Guidelines Overview:

**School Board Policy DEE Local states:** An employee shall be reimbursed for reasonable, allowable expenses incurred in carrying out District business only with the prior approval of the employee's immediate supervisor. Reimbursement for authorized travel shall be in accordance with legal requirements. Accounting records shall accurately reflect that no state or federal funds were used to reimburse travel expenses beyond those authorized for state employees. For any authorized expense incurred, the employee shall submit a statement, with receipts to the extent feasible, documenting actual expenses and in accordance with administrative procedures.

**Note: Travel expenses incurred due to the fault of a traveler, except for extenuating circumstances, such as late registration, canceled flight, etc. are not considered to be reasonable or necessary; therefore, all such expenses shall be paid or reimbursed by the traveler.**

All travel expenses shall comply with federal, state and local guidelines. The District shall apply the same travel guidelines and rates for all travel expenses regardless of funding sources, except for the following:

- Excess lodging above the TEA schedule, as applicable only with local funds (Fund 199)

### Federal guidelines (IRS):

- All travel expenses shall be paid under an Accountable Plan: 1) travel must have a business connection; 2) the traveler shall account for all expenses; 3) excess advances, if any, shall be reimbursed to the district; and 4) meal expenses shall be in conjunction with overnight travel only.
- The meal expenses for the day of departure and return shall be adjusted based on the time of departure and return as noted in the District travel guidelines.
- Travel advances will not be provided to a traveler more than 30 days prior to the travel event.
- If any travel expenses fail to meet the accountable plan guidelines, the payment to (or on behalf of) the traveler shall be taxed through the normal payroll cycle.

### Federal Guidelines (EDGAR):

- All travel expenses paid with federal grant funds (typically funds 2XX) shall meet the new EDGAR requirements (200.474) such as: 1) all travel costs must be reasonable and necessary; 2) all travel costs must be consistent with the district's travel policy; 3) all travel costs must be directly related to the grant award; and 4) all travel costs must meet the obligation of expenses rules.
- In addition, all federally-funded travel expenses must meet the TEA's Current Travel & Mileage Reimbursement Rates (as published in the most recent TEA Correspondence).

### State Guidelines (TEA):

- All mileage, lodging, and meal reimbursement rates published by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts apply to all grants (federal and state, typically funds 2XX, 3XX and 4XX) funded by TEA for individuals on travel status. Refer to TEA rates for the current fiscal year at: <https://fmx.cpa.state.tx.us/fm/travel/travelrates.php>
- All travel expenses paid with federal and state grant funds shall meet the allowable travel expenses as specified in the TexTravel Guidelines, subject to limits imposed by District travel guidelines.

## Local District Guidelines:

The local District guidelines shall apply to all travel expenses regardless of funding source for in-state and out-of-state travel. All anticipated travel costs shall be submitted on a Travel Authorization Form, approved by the immediate supervisor, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and Superintendent. All anticipated travel costs shall be encumbered to the appropriate budget account code(s) before any travel-related costs are incurred by the district or traveler.

In accordance with the State Comptroller's TexTravel Guidelines, the district acknowledges that discount or reward programs, such as flights, hotel, etc., are not things of value belonging to the district. The administrative burden to track the individual reward programs of employees would be administratively impractical and thus the district has determined that the employee may retain the value, if any that they receive personally due to school business related travel.

## Travel Rates:

The mileage, lodging, and meal reimbursement rates published by the comptroller apply to all travel reimbursement rates. The link below to the Texas Education Agency Rates should be used to determine the appropriate rates for in-state and out-of-state travel:

[http://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/News\\_and\\_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA\\_Letters/Travel\\_and\\_Mileage\\_Reimbursement/](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Travel_and_Mileage_Reimbursement/)

\*Please refer to the district website for the mileage chart that shall be followed when traveling.

## **District Allowable Travel Expenses:**

### Meals

- Full Meal Per Diems – If the dates of travel are all full days and no meals are provided by the event, indicate the number of days for meals on the Travel Authorization form. The total number of meals advanced will be based on whether meals are provided by the event and the time of departure and/or return and the current TEA meal per diem for the destination location/month.
- Adjusted Meal Per Diems:
  - Adjust the requested amount for meals if the conference/workshop will include any meals. If meals (except continental breakfast and receptions) are provided as part of the event, reductions should be made in accordance with the TEA Reimbursement Rates.
  - The meal per diem must be adjusted on the 1<sup>st</sup> and last day of travel based on the time of departure and/or return. If the traveler will be away from home during a meal time, the meal per diem should be included in the adjusted meal per diem calculation.
- Student Meals: Attach a list of students to support the number of meals requested for co-curricular or extra-curricular events, if applicable. Refer to the district reimbursement rates for in-state and out-of-state travel for students. A detailed receipt for the student meals must be submitted with the Travel Reimbursement form. Current rates: \$21 per day in-state and \$30 per day out-of-state.
- Whenever students leave prior to noon for travel and arrive back after 5:00 pm the following rates will apply: \$7 for lunch and \$7 for dinner. However, if students arrive before 5:00 pm, they will receive only the \$7 for lunch. If students will be traveling all day then they will receive \$21 per student. All receipts need to be submitted.
- A check will be issued to the traveler within 30 days of the travel event for all staff and student meal per diems. All of the required documentation shall be submitted to the business office in accordance with the business office deadlines.

- The traveler shall submit all documentation after the travel event and shall certify the “actual costs”. The actual costs shall not include any meal tips. Travelers do not have to submit receipts for their meal expenses, but may be required to validate the actual costs with receipts, as appropriate. If the actual costs are less than the advanced per diem, the traveler must reimburse the unspent funds to the district within 10 days of the travel event.

#### School Board Travel

- Hotel – The board member is allowed an actual cost reimbursement for a single or double room for workshop/conferences. When a group travels, the board members shall stay at least two to a room unless there is a very good reason to rent individual rooms. The check should be made out to the lodging facility. A single board member wishing to take his/her family will be reimbursed for a single rate room only.
- Meals – Meals will be allocated 100% on a \$30 per day basis when traveling within the state of Texas. When traveling outside of Texas, the per day allocation shall be 1)actual expense not to exceed \$30 per day if overnight lodging is not required, 2)actual expense not to exceed federal rates for each locality when overnight lodging is required. The district will not reimburse the board member for family members or guests who are not employees of the district. Board members will be reimbursed for meal expenses exceeding the per diem allowance when meals/luncheons are part of the Conference/Workshop agenda and receipts are submitted.
- Receipts – Required to receive reimbursement for transportation, lodging and other authorized travel expenses. Meals shall be paid on a per diem basis for travel.
- Non-Reimbursable – The following will not be reimbursable:
  - Non-school related telephone charges.
  - Entertainment such as dances, shows, movies and socials.
  - Non-school related supplies and materials.
- Mileage – Mileage expenses incurred by the board member’s personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the rate TEA designates which is in accordance with the latest Robstown ISD mileage schedule based on the Texas Comptroller. School related travel within the city where the conference, meeting or workshop is being held shall be reimbursed only if documented.
- Reimbursement – The board member must return all reimbursable receipts along with out of district travel form to the Superintendent’s Office no later than 15 days after the trip is completed. Reimbursement is made to the board member if the expenses were more than the amount advanced. A refund is collected if the advance is greater than the amount expended.

#### Lodging

- Lodging costs shall be allowable for travel events that require an overnight stay away from the traveler’s home (typically, San Antonio). No lodging shall be allowable in the traveler’s home city at a commercial lodging establishment.
- The maximum nights of lodging shall be based on the start and end times of the travel event and the distance of the travel location. Lodging costs that exceed the required minimum shall not be deemed necessary or allowable travel costs. For example, if an event in San Antonio has a 10 am or later start, lodging costs would not be reasonable, necessary or allowable travel costs.
- The traveler shall estimate the lodging expense per night (including all taxes, surcharges, etc.). A conference or event hotel shall be the first priority to minimize transportation costs at the event city.
- The federal per diem rates for lodging shall be used to determine the maximum amount that may be charged to a state or federal grant. The maximum lodging rate, for state and federal grants, shall be for the city of travel and the month of travel based on the TEA website.
- The traveler (or campus secretary on behalf of the traveler) shall make the hotel reservation and secure with their personal credit card, a district travel card or American Express card, as appropriate. If the hotel requires a one (1) night’s deposit, the deposit shall be paid with a district travel card or American Express card, as appropriate.
- Hotel and travel websites such as Hotels.Com, Expedia, Travelocity, etc. shall not be used to make hotel reservations if the website requires pre-payment of the hotel stay.

- Lodging costs shall be paid with a district-issued check on site at the time of arrival and/or departure based on the hotel's charging policy. Travelers shall not pay the hotel expense with personal funds and seek reimbursement after-the-fact unless some of the travel costs are for personal travel days. Under this scenario, the traveler must ensure that only district-authorized travel costs are paid with the district credit card/check.
- The traveler may, at his/her request, stay with a family member or friend instead of at a hotel. If the traveler selects this option, the traveler shall not receive any payment in lieu of lodging costs.
- The traveler may, at his/her request, choose to return to their home city each day of a multiple-day travel event if the distance from their home city to the event city is less than 100 miles each way. The traveler may receive mileage reimbursement for each trip in lieu of the lodging costs.
- The traveler shall present a Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate to a Texas hotel. If the traveler fails to present the certificate, the traveler shall reimburse the district for the unallowable tax expense. The Hotel Occupancy Certificate can be found at the district's Business Office and the State Comptroller's Website. The hotel occupancy tax exemption does not apply to out-of-state travel.
- The traveler shall present a Sales Tax Exemption Certificate to a Texas hotel for parking costs. If the traveler fails to present the certificate, the traveler shall reimburse the district for the unallowable tax expense. The Sales Tax Exemption Certificate can be found on the district's Business Webpage and the State Comptroller's Website. The sales tax exemption does not apply to out-of-state travel.
- When at least two (2) travelers (district employees) are traveling to the same event, they may share the lodging and each receive the maximum lodging rate on the TEA schedule. Each traveler shall submit a travel voucher for their portion of the lodging costs.
- When a traveler shares lodging with a non-district employee or district employee not in travel status, the maximum lodging costs shall be the appropriate TEA schedule rate for single occupancy.
- Internet charges at a lodging facility shall be allowable only for Cabinet members to support email, Skyward or other work-related access. Internet charges for other staff members shall be subject to pre-approval on the Travel Reimbursement Form on a case-by-case basis.
- Lodging costs such as movies, gym facility, spa or other non-essential costs are not allowable for reimbursement or payment with any district funds.
- Lodging tips may be paid at the traveler's discretion, but will not be allowable travel costs for reimbursement or payment with any district funds.
- A detailed lodging receipt must be submitted by the traveler with the Travel Reimbursement Form within 10 days after the travel event.

#### Transportation – Flights

- Flight costs shall be allowable for travel events that require travel away from the traveler's home (typically, Dallas).
- The departure and return dates of the flight shall be based on the start and end times of the travel event and the distance of the travel location.
- The actual cost of commercial air transportation (lowest coach fare) to accommodate the required travel dates of the travel event shall be allowable costs.
- Travelers should travel to their destination location by the most economical means, i.e. either flight or mileage; however, travelers may opt to travel to their event destination via district/personal vehicle in lieu of flying to the event for medical or personal comfort reasons. If the traveler opts to travel to an out-of-state destination, the costs/reimbursement for transportation shall be limited to the lesser of the mileage or estimated flight cost.
- All flights shall be purchased by the Business Office for the most economical route and schedule to meet the travel plans. Travelers shall submit their travel preferences to their respective supervisor for approval – the campus or department shall forward the preferences to the Business Office.
- All flights shall be purchased through American Airlines (AA) **using the government rate plan** unless there is no flight service to the destination. Travelers on a AA flight are allowed to check up to two (1) bags, limited to no more than 50 pounds each at no additional charge. Luggage charges for a third (3<sup>rd</sup>) bag shall not be allowable with district funds.
- For all flights, other than AA, luggage charges, if any, shall be limited the fees for two (2) bags, up to 50 pounds per bag.

- A rental car at the event location shall be allowable if it is the most economical method to access the event location.
- All flight costs associated with deviations from the required travel plans, such as pre or post personal days or canceled travel plans due to personal reasons shall be paid and/or reimbursed by the traveler. For example, if the required travel dates are Sunday through Wednesday, but the traveler opts to depart on Friday to spend personal days at the travel destination, the additional cost, if any, to fly on Friday shall be paid by the traveler.

#### Transportation – Mileage

- Mileage reimbursements shall be allowable for travel events that require travel away from the traveler's home.
- Travelers should use a district-owned vehicle as the preferred method of transportation. A request for a vehicle shall be submitted through the Superintendent's office. The driver shall be listed on the Authorized Drivers of District-Owned Vehicles. If a district-owned vehicle is not available for the travel event, the traveler shall be authorized to use their personal vehicle or request a flight, as appropriate.
- Travelers who opt to drive their personal vehicle instead of a district-owned vehicle, shall be reimbursed at the current mileage rate established by the Texas Comptroller and/or TEA, i.e. the current rate is \$.53.5 per mile.
- Travelers shall be required to submit fuel receipts, if any, for travel in a district-owned vehicle. Travelers shall not be required to submit any fuel receipts for travel in a personal vehicle.
- The District has a Mileage Chart on the website to follow when calculating mileage reimbursement. [http://www.robstownisd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=290366&type=d&pREC\\_ID=668329](http://www.robstownisd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=290366&type=d&pREC_ID=668329)
- Mileage costs related to personal destinations before, during or after the travel event shall not be allowable costs. In addition, mileage costs due to the traveler's error in reaching the destination, such as getting lost shall not be allowable costs.
- When four or fewer employees travel on the same itinerary, only one may be reimbursed for mileage. When more than four employees travel on the same itinerary, only one out of every four may be reimbursed for mileage. The district shall allow for an equal distribution of the mileage allotment among the travelers if they opt to drive separately to the event. An exception may be made during the summer months due to the inconvenience/cost of driving to a common location.

#### Transportation – Rental Car

- Rental car costs shall be allowable for travel events that require travel away from the traveler's home (typically, Dallas) via a flight if use of the rental car is the most economical mode of transportation.
- Rental car costs shall not be allowable if the traveler can reach the travel destination via taxi or shuttle at a lower cost.
- Rental car costs shall include all applicable taxes and mandatory charges. Costs may also include a charge for a collision damage waiver or a loss damage waiver if not already included in the contracted rate for the rental. [Note: The district auto insurance policy includes liability coverage for hired autos such as rental cars up to the policy limits.]
- Charges for liability insurance supplement, personal accident insurance, safe trip insurance or personal effects insurance are not allowable costs.
- A travel card shall be issued to the traveler for the approved, estimated rental car expense as reflected on the Travel Authorization form.
- Rental car costs shall be paid with a district-issued credit card (travel card or Amex) on site at the time of arrival and/or departure based on the rental car company's charging policy. Travelers shall not pay the rental car expense with personal funds and seek reimbursement after-the-fact unless some of the travel costs are for personal travel days. Under this scenario, the traveler must ensure that only district-authorized travel costs are paid with the district credit card.
- Travelers shall be required to submit fuel receipts, if any, for travel in a rental car.
- Rental car costs associated with deviations from the required travel plans, such as pre or post personal days shall be paid by the traveler. For example, if the required travel dates are Sunday through

Wednesday, but the traveler opts to depart on Friday to spend personal days at the travel destination, the additional cost, if any, for the additional days (Friday & Saturday) shall be paid by the traveler.

- Charges for additional drivers may only be reimbursed if incurred for a business reason such as both drivers are district employees on travel status.
- Detailed rental car and fuel receipts must be submitted by the traveler with the Travel Settlement Form within 10 days after the travel event.

#### Transportation – Parking Charges

- Parking charges shall be allowable for all travel events within Nueces County, in-state and out-of-state, as appropriate, if the traveler is traveling in a rental car, district-owned vehicle, or personal car while on travel status.
- Parking at the airport at the traveler's home location shall be allowable, as appropriate, for all required travel dates. Additional parking days, at the traveler's option due to pre or post travel days shall not be allowable costs with district funds.
- Parking receipts must be submitted by the traveler with the Travel Reimbursement Form within 10 days after the travel event.

#### Transportation – Toll Charges

- Toll charges shall be allowable for all in-state travel events, as applicable, if the traveler is traveling in a rental car or district-owned vehicle while on travel status. (This excludes personal vehicle)
- Toll receipts, as appropriate, must be submitted by the traveler with the Travel Reimbursement Form within 10 days after the travel event. Toll charges while in a district-owned vehicle are forwarded to the district by the toll authority.

#### Transportation – Taxi, Shuttle, etc.

- Taxi and shuttle costs shall be allowable for all in-state and out-of-state travel events, as applicable, if the traveler is on travel status.
- Taxi and shuttle tips may be paid at the traveler's discretion, but will not be allowable travel costs for reimbursement or payment with any district funds.

#### Registration Fees

- Registration fees for a conference, workshop, or other training event as supported by a registration form are allowable costs. Fee-based optional events such as a speaker or awards luncheon shall be approved on a case-by-case basis if the event fee is reasonable and the traveler would derive a work-related benefit from attending the event. Fee-based optional events such as socials, excursions, tours, or other purely entertainment events are not allowable costs.
- The authorized travel expenses shall be supported by the registration form and Schedule of Events. The documentation shall include the start and end dates of the event, event location and registration fee.

#### **District Non-Allowable Travel Expenses:**

- Alcoholic drinks or beverages
- Entertainment expenses, such as in-room movies, fee-based hotel amenities such as gyms, spas, etc.
- Expenses for spouses or other non-district employees
- Expenses due to the traveler's failure to cancel a registration or travel arrangements (except for extenuating circumstances)
- Hotel Internet charges (unless expense is work-related and pre-approved on travel authorization)
- Non-substantiated or fraudulent travel reimbursement requests shall be non-allowable travel expenses. Travelers who submit fraudulent travel reimbursement requests shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## In-district travel

- In-district travel will be authorized by the traveler's immediate supervisor prior to trips made
- The in-district traveler shall use form no. 022280 (travel log) for advancement/reimbursement.
- Supervisors are responsible for reviewing traveler's log to be certain that excessive or unauthorized mileage is not claimed.
- Supervisor's signature on the log shall constitute verification of legitimate mileage claimed.
- There is no in-district mileage scale. Traveler shall use his/her vehicle's odometer.

