

United General District 304

Policy Manual

512 Business Travel Expenses

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United General District 304 encourages staff and commissioners to improve their educational qualifications in subjects and fields of endeavor which are directly related to the organization's operations, activities and objectives which will place them in a position to improve their job performance and professional development. The following policy will also address reimbursement for non-educational travel and business expenses.

To qualify for travel expense reimbursement, the following criteria must be met:

- A Travel Authorization form and/or Post Travel Reimbursement form must be completed for educational expenses. The Travel Authorization form must have the approval of the appropriate supervisor and then be sent to Office Supervisor for review prior to booking arrangements and/or the travel occurring. **If** the total amount authorized is \$1,000 or greater, it will need the additional approval of the Chief Operating Officer or Superintendent/CFO. The Post Travel Reimbursement form should be submitted within *one week* of return to the Office Supervisor for review. The Office Supervisor will then send to the Chief Operating Officer or Superintendent/CFO for approval. The Chief Operating Officer will submit to Accounting.
- Only meeting, workshop and/or conference travel expenses that are work-related (education directly related to improving your knowledge, skill and performance in your professional career) are reimbursable.
- Employees on leave of absence are not eligible for travel expenses.

REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

MEALS:

Meals are typically reimbursed *only* on a per diem basis using the FED GSA rates. Staff will be responsible for checking any grant requirement that may apply. Attendees will not be reimbursed for meals that are already included as part of the meeting, workshop, conference, or flight (i.e. continental breakfast, lunch, get-acquainted receptions, social functions, etc.) Tips *are included* in the stated per diem rate.

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When travelling with invited partners who are minors, staff will purchase meals for the minors with the District credit card and should not to exceed the FED GSA rate per person. An itemized receipt and sign-in sheet are required. The estimated cost for these meals should be included on the Travel Authorization form. The meal for the staff member will be reimbursed on a per diem basis and should be paid for with their personal credit card or cash.

Expenditures for alcoholic beverages (including wine or beer) will not be reimbursed.

****Exception:** Meal expenses paid by the district during common meal time may exceed the above rate for district sponsored events (i.e. retreats, meetings, work sessions, etc.)

LODGING: (Receipts are required)

Lodging should be reserved at a rate not to exceed the per diem rates listed on the FED GSA. Exceptions may be made if the conference/training is being held at a hotel and the maximum benefit to the staff member will be achieved by staying at the same hotel. There will be no reimbursement for valet parking if self-park is available. Incidental room charges (i.e. movie channel rental, mini-fridge purchases, etc.) will not be reimbursed and should be made on staff member's personal credit card. Staff will be responsible for checking any grant requirement that may apply.

Use of short-term rentals, such as Airbnb or VRBO, in lieu of hotel must be pre-approved by supervisor. The total cost (i.e. nightly charge, cleaning fee, host fee, etc.) must not exceed the FED GSA rate (per person if shared).

When two or more attendees are traveling together, one attendee may pay and be reimbursed for the lodging expenses of other attendees provided that all the expenses have the appropriate prior approval. Room sharing should be noted on each staff member's Travel Authorization form regardless of whom is incurring the charges.

TRANSPORTATION: (Receipts are required)

Airfare:

A Travel Authorization form must be signed by the staff member, their supervisor and reviewed by Office Supervisor before travel arrangements are booked. Airfare should usually be booked at least 30 days in advance to receive more economical rates, so staff should plan accordingly. Airfare should typically be purchased at the least expensive main cabin fare offered unless this would:

- Require circuitous routing
- Require travel during unreasonable hours
- Excessively prolong travel

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- Result in additional costs that would offset the transportation savings
- Offer accommodations not reasonably adequate for the traveler's medical needs

These conditions must be justified, documented and approved by the Chief Operating Officer and/or Superintendent/CFO on a case-by-case basis for these exceptions to apply.

One checked bag fee is allowable.

The District does not prohibit the use of staff mileage plan membership numbers as long as no additional cost to the District is incurred.

Taxi/Shuttle/Rideshare:

Taxi, shuttle and rideshare fare is restricted to travel between the airport, hotel and/or event location. **All rideshare charges (i.e. Uber, Lyft) should be made on the staff member's personal credit card and reimbursed appropriately.** Only those rideshare levels that are considered "economy" (versus "luxury") will be eligible to be reimbursed (i.e. Uber Black would not be reimbursable). Tips for rideshare drivers should not exceed \$5 per trip. **District credit card information should not be stored in staff's personal rideshare accounts.** Estimated rideshare charges should be included on the Travel Authorization form. Exceptions will require approval by the Chief Operating Officer and/or Superintendent/CFO.

Rental Car:

Car rental is authorized when necessary and should be made by the Office Supervisor on the District's rental car account. For staff who choose to personally rent a car even though a rental car was not deemed necessary, reimbursement is limited to the amount of taxi/shuttle fare that would have been incurred. Rental car insurance will not be reimbursed. Estimated rental car charges should be included on the Travel Authorization form. Exceptions to this will require the approval of the Chief Operating Officer or Superintendent/CFO.

Parking:

Receipts are required. Estimated parking charges should be included on the Travel Authorization form. Valet parking is not approved if self-park is available. Parking at the SeaTac airport parking garage is limited to the "General Parking" rate.

Mileage:

Mileage will be reimbursed at the current Internal Revenue Service rate per mile. For mileage calculations, the point of origin should typically be from the District office. The staff member may be asked to attach a web-based mapping document to verify distance.

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**To receive reimbursement for mileage, staff members must have on file with HR the Automobile Insurance/Driver's License Attestation, Driving Record Release of Interest and have watched the Driving Safety Training video.

Other Travel Expenses:

Attendees choosing to travel out-of-state by automobile shall be reimbursed the amount of the least expensive round trip main cabin airfare. This amount will be determined prior to travel and noted on the Travel Authorization form. No mileage, lodging or meals will be reimbursed for additional travel expenses incurred for staff choosing this option.

Trip or travel insurance will not be reimbursed.

Theft, loss or damage to personal property will not be reimbursed.

Internet fee access will be reimbursed if needed to complete work-related responsibilities.

NOTE: Any allowable incidental travel expenses not pre-approved on the Travel Authorization form, must be paid using the staff member's personal credit card or cash and submitted with itemized receipts and explanation for reimbursement on the Post Travel Reimbursement form.

NOTE: Any attendee who cannot attend a conference/meeting/workshop will be liable for ALL ADVANCED FUNDS unless the attendee provides adequate documentation indicating the non-attendance was beyond the control of the attendee (i.e. death in family). The final determination will be made by two of the three members of the Executive Team.

The policy above also applies to interns, volunteers and invited partners of the District.

Compensable Hours While Traveling:

Whether time spent travelling for work constitutes paid work time depends on whether the travel time is considered "hours worked." If the travel or commute time is considered "hours worked" under RCW 49.46.020 or WAC 296-126-002(8), then it is compensable, and staff must be paid for this time. Generally, time spent traveling is compensable, unless it is normal home-to-work commute time. When pay is required, the time spent traveling is considered hours worked and must be included when determining overtime pay obligations.

Home-to-work travel. Normal commuting time to the staff member's regular worksite is *not* treated as hours worked under the FLSA.

Home to work on a special one-day assignment in another city. When staff must travel out of

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town for work but returns home the same day, all the time spent traveling during the day is compensable, regardless of the staff's regular work hours. However, an employer may deduct the time the staff would have spent commuting to his or her regular work location.

Travel that is all in a day's work. Time spent traveling to and from different worksites during the day is work time and must be paid.

Out-of-town travel. For out-of-town travel, Washington state law is more favorable than federal law. In Washington, all travel time related to work is compensable regardless of the number of hours or when travel takes place. It also includes any time necessary to get to an airport, train station, or other transit center necessary to complete the out-of-town travel. Once staff arrives at their place of lodging, the staff member is no longer "on duty" and that time is not compensable as "hours worked" so long as the worker is free to engage in personal activities.

When is training and meeting time and when is it considered "hours worked". Training and meeting time means all time spent by staff attending lectures, meetings, training periods, and similar activities required by the employer. Time spent during such training and meeting time is considered hours worked. However, time spent by staff in these activities will not be counted as hours worked if 1) the attendance is voluntary; 2) the staff member performs no productive work; 3) the meeting takes place outside of regular working hours; and 4) the meeting or lecture is not directly related to the attendee's current work. For instance, after hours "mixers" are not considered hours worked and would not be compensable.

Travelling and chaperoning youth. When travelling with youth, time spent chaperoning youth is compensable. Staff should be mindful of this and plan accordingly (i.e. split shifts with other chaperones). Time spent during "lights out" is considered "off-duty" and is not compensable.

Driving at the direction of the employer. When staff are required to drive themselves or others, all driving time is compensable.

Driving in lieu of faster mode of public transportation. When a staff member voluntarily chooses to drive to an out-of-state location (i.e. training conference), only those hours that it would have taken via the faster mode of transportation will be compensated.