Travel Expenses and Reimbursement for District Employees
Chapter 7, Part 3 of Administrative Code
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Article 1 – Expenses and Reimbursement

1.1 General Policy

Payment for travel and other expenses shall be allowed when reasonably necessary to represent the interests and objectives of the District. Business expenses shall normally be paid per the schedule described in this section.

1.2 Expense Limits

Expenditures for lodging, meals, transportation and other activities should provide for a reasonable level of comfort and convenience, but sound judgment shall be exercised to ensure reasonable cost to the District. Reasonable cost will vary depending on locality. All travel arrangements, including airfare, train, lodging and car rental, should be made through a District employee. Whenever possible, travel arrangements and other activity costs (especially conference fees) should be pre-paid. District employees will work to ensure that travel arrangements are conducted using government or conference rates, whenever possible.

When reimbursement is permitted, employees will be reimbursed only up to the actual and necessary expenses incurred in performance of their official District duties. Expenses in excess of $20.00 require receipts for reimbursement. For reimbursable expenses of $20.00 or less, it is expected that an itemized receipt be provided, however, a written explanation is required if receipts are not available.

1.3 Travel Authorization

Employees must receive the prior approval of the General Manager to travel outside of Los Angeles and Orange Counties and the District's services area on District business. The General Manager may travel within the United States on District business without prior approval. Any travel outside of the United States by the General Manager or any other employee must be approved in advance by the Board. Unauthorized travel expenses will generally not be reimbursed.

1.4 Authorized Expenses

A. Expenses in General

Authorized expenses normally include lodging, meals, common carrier fares, rental of automobiles, tips (not to exceed 20% of the cost of food or service), trip cancellation insurance costs and parking fees.
Employees are not entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred by non-District employees or for expenses already reimbursed by another party.

B. Lodging/Overnight Travel

Lodging should only be obtained when outside of the local area (Los Angeles and Orange Counties) or in extenuating circumstances with prior approval by the General Manager. Lodging shall be obtained at the most economical rate available. Government rates should be utilized, if available. Use of conference headquarter hotels is encouraged. Whenever practical, hotel expenses for room, parking and taxes will be charged on the District credit card. If an employee uses his or her personal credit card, the charges will be reimbursed. Personal and other incidentals (movies, snack bar fees, personal phone calls, etc.) should not be charged to the District. It is the responsibility of the individual traveling to pay for personal and other incidentals and to obtain the hotel folio for reimbursement submittal purposes at the time of check out from the hotel. Business center charges such as faxes, email, etc. are reimbursable if necessary to the performance of official District duties and the business purpose is documented. Business calls to District facilities will be reimbursed in full.

C. Business Meals

Reimbursement for meal expenses shall be provided by the District only upon full compliance with the requirements of the provisions of this section.

1. Only costs associated with conducting business that are reasonably necessary to further the interest of or benefit the purposes or objectives of the District will be reimbursed.

2. Employees shall make every effort to hold meetings at the District’s headquarters to limit unnecessary expenses.

3. A meal receipt must be accompanied by an itemized account of charges or the bill/statement, and must include the cost of meals and non-alcoholic beverages from the restaurant or food establishment where the meeting/meal was conducted, and shall include a description of the business purpose (i.e. the topics covered which relate to District business) of the meeting.

4. A meal furnished by a District employee to a person who is not a District representative will be reimbursed if the business conducted is reasonably necessary to further the interest of or benefit the purposes or objectives of the District.
5. Reimbursement of costs of meals provided to third parties and District contractors are prohibited. The District defines third parties as spouses, family, friends, or persons not doing business with the District.

6. When claiming reimbursement for meals the names of individuals doing business with the District must be provided. At the time of submitting meal expenses, employees need to submit a personal check for costs incurred for third parties. Separate receipts should be requested, whenever possible, for third parties not doing business with the District.

7. Meals that occur in the local service area between District representatives (i.e. between Directors or between employees) are not reimbursable unless there is a business necessity to conduct the meeting during the breakfast, lunch, or dinner hours. A brief explanation of the business necessity must accompany the itemized meal receipt when submitting for reimbursement.

The one exception to the rule is when district representatives (2 or more) are at a conference and one receipt includes the cost for all District representatives. Meals provided to staff during working hours such as staff meetings and mandated trainings which prevent employees from taking their meal break are also reimbursable.

8. All meals for which expenses are incurred while traveling shall be reimbursed at the daily maximum rate of $85 per District representative. Meal reimbursement is intended to cover the incremental expense of having to eat out while traveling. It is not intended to cover the entire cost of the meal. Hence, the daily maximum meal allowance includes the meal, non-alcoholic beverages and tips. When the cost of meals is included in a registration fee, separate reimbursement for the covered meal is not allowed.

D. Attendance at Conferences

Employees shall be entitled to reasonable expenses incurred for traveling to attend approved conferences, beginning one day prior to the start of the conference/business meetings and no later than one day following the conclusion of the conference.

E. Transportation

Use of air travel, train, rental car or private car shall be selected on the basis of the most reasonable and appropriate method, taking into consideration distance, time
and total costs to the District. The following types of travel expenditures while on District business are allowable:

(1) **Travel by private automobile** – The employee must possess a valid California driver’s license and carry automobile insurance. Each employee shall provide proof of a valid California driver’s license and proof of insurance to the Human Resources Department which shall be reviewed and updated annually. The District shall register for the California Department of Motor Vehicle’s Motor Vehicle Record pool for purposes of confirming on-going compliance. It is the responsibility of all District employees to practice safe and defensive driving. Any damages to the vehicle or service repairs are of a personal nature and shall not be reimbursed by the District. Mileage reimbursement will be based on the vehicle (i.e., the owner of the vehicle will be reimbursed and not the passengers). All employees who drive on behalf of or for District business or purposes shall comply with the driver’s license and insurance requirements as set forth in this Section. Any employee not in compliance with the requirements set forth above shall not drive on behalf of or for District business or purposes and shall be ineligible to receive automobile or transportation allowance or mileage reimbursement.

(2) **Automobile/Transportation Allowance** – Unless otherwise approved by the District Board, the only District employee to be provided an automobile or transportation allowance shall be the District General Manager. The automobile or transportation allowance is provided to reimburse the General Manager for his/her reasonable and necessary automobile or alternative transportation expenses, which include the cost of vehicle acquisition/lease, maintenance and repairs, insurance and gasoline costs for vehicle use or for the reasonable cost of obtaining alternate means of transportation for District business or purposes.

(3) Mileage reimbursement shall be at the prevailing IRS established rate. Mileage will be reimbursed for business conducted on behalf of the District and will be reimbursed from and to the District’s office to the location of conference/business meetings.

To process mileage reimbursement, employees must submit a mileage reimbursement form within two (2) months of incurring the mileage expense. The balance of miles after subtracting miles that are usually traveled from the employee’s home to the District’s office will be reimbursed. Documentation verifying the miles traveled such as Google maps or MapQuest directions must accompany the mileage reimbursement form.
Any mileage incurred for conferences and training in which the schedule requires that the employee travel on a non-business day will be fully reimbursed.

Mileage will not be reimbursed to employees who receive automobile or transportation allowance. Parking will be reimbursed upon presentation of the original receipt.

(4) Air Travel – Air travel shall be in coach class or equivalent service, unless the General Manager determines some physical problem or exceptional circumstance warrants travel in a higher class. In the event that trip cancellation protection insurance is purchased, all proceeds paid from any claim shall be paid or reimbursed to the District. If an employee wishes to drive rather than fly to a destination, he/she may do so, subject to all requirements set forth in this Section.

Train Travel - Train travel shall be in coach class or equivalent service, unless the General Manager determines some physical problem or exceptional circumstance warrants travel in a higher class. In the event that trip cancellation protection insurance is purchased, all proceeds paid from any claim shall be paid or reimbursed to the District.

(5) Rental vehicles – When rental vehicles are used, the least expensive, appropriate vehicle is to be used. The District’s standard classes of rental car are compact or mid-size models, unless district-related business requires a larger car. Limousines or chauffer/driver rentals are prohibited.

The employee is responsible for all out-of-pocket expenses in excess of the District’s recommendation that are not approved in advance by the General Manager.

Vehicles rented using District funds (whether directly or indirectly) can only be rented and driven by the Employee. The length of the rental vehicle shall be limited to the day before the conference starts and to the next day after the conference ends. Business hours for vehicle rental pick up and drop off will also be taken into consideration under this policy.

Gas is reimbursable only for rental vehicle expenses. The employee should refuel the car prior to returning it to the rental agency to avoid excessive gasoline charges. Rental vehicle insurance is an authorized expense. Any employee involved in an accident while
driving a rental car must immediately report the incident to the rental agency and their supervisor, or general manager.

1.5 Unauthorized Expenses

Items of a personal nature are not reimbursable including: movies, entertainment, premium television services, alcoholic beverages, dry-cleaning, spas, gyms, barber, magazines, shoeshine, travel insurance which insures the individual (not trip cancellation protection insurance), purchase of clothing or toiletries, loss of tickets, fines or traffic violations or other items of a personal nature. If unauthorized expenses have been paid by the District, the employee will be responsible for immediate reimbursement to the District either by personal check or a payroll deduction.

1.6 Reimbursement of Expenses

All claims for reimbursement of expenses shall be submitted to the District for review as soon as practicably possible, however, must be submitted no later than sixty (60) days after the expense is incurred. Claims submitted after sixty (60) days, must be approved by the Board of Directors. Claims must be submitted on forms supplied by the District. Such forms must include a description of the expense, names (if appropriate), date incurred and a description of the business purpose of the expense. Expenses incurred by a District employee but prepaid by the District or charged on a District credit card must be listed on the expense claim form and noted as paid by the District.

1.7 Credit Card Usage

All employees authorized to use a District credit card shall sign and be subject to the provisions of the District’s policy regarding expenditures allowable by the District while on work-related business. Failure to adhere to the provisions of the District’s policy can result in a deduction of funds from the employee’s wages, disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and potential legal action. District credit cards shall be issued and used only for District business. Personal usage of a District credit card is strictly prohibited. If personal expenses are charged to a District credit card unintentionally, those expenses must be reimbursed to the District within ten (10) days of discovery.