



SANTA PAULA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Travel and Conference Guidelines

Purpose

The Santa Paula Unified School District (**District**), Board of Education (**Board**) authorizes payment for actual and necessary travel and conference expenses incurred by District Employees (**Employee**) performing approved business (**event**) on behalf of the District. Associated travel and conference expenses are reimbursed according to the following guidelines. (BP # 3350)

Scope

The Board provides for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred during the course of authorized business on behalf of the District. Reasonable expenses represent the use of public funds which are allowable under law, policy, and procedure and defensible when subjected to public scrutiny. Business for the District includes expenses incurred in connection with approved District representation from which the District will derive a specific benefit associated with approved Employee attendance at trainings, conferences, hearings or other meetings.

Request to Attend Form (RTA)

The RTA must include an estimate of all costs associated the event request.

Attach to the RTA any requisition necessary for expenses that the District will prepay by Purchase Order or check.

Example = Registration for event or Lodging (if they accept PO or check in advance of trip)

NOTE: Please consider deadlines and time to process your RTA documents and turn in forms as early as possible to meet deadlines for early discounted registration.

Reservations should not be made until all approvals have been received. The Business Office staff will notify you by email and letter when the RTA package is approved.

Absence of a RTA filed and approved in a timely fashion may make reimbursement of expenses difficult or even impossible.

Travel expenses that were not approved may be denied.

RTA Approval Signatures

Please read the routing directions below carefully and note: if there are less than 30 days to the event date, it is strongly encouraged that the package be processed in person through all approvals and then taken directly to the Business Office staff.

If necessary signatures and program information are missing, Request to Attend documents will be denied by division heads and forms will be returned to the originator.

Signatures Required **BEFORE** delivery to Business Office Staff:

- ↪ All principals or department heads must sign the form where indicated confirming approval of attendance, **AND** *(Example = Site Budgets)*
- ↪ Submit to their respective Assistant Superintendent or Executive Director of Special Education for approval, **AND** *(Example = Spec Ed staff, Teachers, C Core)*
- ↪ Attendees who are funding the conference/workshop/in-service with categorical funds must obtain the signature of the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, **AND/OR** *(Example = Title I or Title II)*
- ↪ Administrators requesting attendance for themselves shall obtain the signature of the respective Assistant Superintendent or Executive Director **AND** *(Example = Principals, APs)*
- ↪ Assistant Superintendents and Executive Directors will have this form approved by the Superintendent

After obtaining the signatures of the necessary administrators, all necessary forms and requisitions shall then be submitted to the Business Office staff for final budgetary approval by the requestor.

Board Approval Instances:

When Travel is Out of state OR more than \$1,000 per person, a Request to Attend (RTA) form must be submitted and Board approved before Travel and Conference costs are incurred. (BP #6153)

In order to allow time for Board Approval a MINIMUM of six weeks advance notice is required for these RTA packages (placement on the next Board meeting for approval must be done first and THEN processing of the package starts).

Registration

Registration requests should be made far enough in advance to take advantage of all available discounts. Provided sufficient monies have been budgeted, Supervisory and Board approval

obtained, Business Services will prepay necessary expenses such as registration. If registration is paid upon arrival at the conference by the Employee, an original receipt from the vendor must be submitted for reimbursement. In some instances, a copy of the employee's cancelled check or credit card receipt may be requested to support the amount claimed.

District Employees are discouraged from attending out-of-state conferences, trainings, etc., as there may be similar events offered periodically within the State. All out-of-state travel must be pre-approved by the Board.

Please be cognizant of the constraints of fiscal (school) year budgeting; at fiscal year-end, registration requests for events in the subsequent fiscal year will only be processed to take advantage of available discounts or reservation guarantee which would not be available if the RTA was processed after the end of the fiscal year. Requests made just to expend prior year budgets will not be processed until the subsequent fiscal year as required by generally accepted accounting principles.

Transportation

For travel outside the Southern California area, Employees are anticipated to travel by air.

Employees are required to make their own travel arrangements upon approval of the RTA by Business Services.

The maximum reimbursement for air travel shall not exceed the equivalent cost of the most economical option available for "economy or coach fare." Employees opting for more expensive options will be required to pay the differential. If the carrier charges for one piece of luggage, the District will cover the cost of one piece of luggage.

Departure and arrival times are contingent upon flight schedules and fare discounts. However, travel scheduling should be coordinated to be non-circuitous and reasonably close to the start and end of the event. Choosing to stay in a host location beyond the event for non-District purposes may involve a lesser reimbursement.

If Employees wish to deviate from the reasonable arrival or departure time periods for personal reasons or due to alternative transportation, any excess time (that which is above the time required to fly) is subject to bargaining unit contract leave time provisions. Additional expenses, including meal and lodging costs, resulting from excess travel time are not reimbursable.

For travel outside the Southern California area via alternative transportation such as a personal vehicle, Supervisory authorization must be obtained in advance. Proof of automobile insurance may be required to be submitted with the RTA form. Permission to drive shall not be construed to mean "on District time." Mileage reimbursement will be based on actual miles driven from the applicable District site to the event in a non-circuitous manner at the approved IRS standard mileage reimbursement rate in effect at the time of travel. The maximum reimbursement paid for mileage to areas outside Southern California shall not exceed the equivalent cost of "economy or

coach” air fare, plus the cost of other necessary ground transportation at the destination. For Employees traveling by personal vehicle, departure and arrival times for meal and lodging expenses shall be based on air travel time.

Car Rentals

The use of rental cars is discouraged, if merely for point to point transportation. Courtesy shuttle service, buses, or taxi services should be utilized between airports and hotels or meeting locations.

A car rental must be approved in advance by the applicable Assistant Superintendent and/or Superintendent. Employees should check availability and cost, and make their own car rental arrangements.

Additional optional liability insurance offered by the rental company is not reimbursable.

Lodging

Lodging reimbursement may provided when travel is outside of Ventura County and attendance is for two or more consecutive days. Reimbursement for lodging within Ventura County is allowed only when it is a requirement of the event. Lodging shall be obtained at the most economical rate available for good quality. Employees are required to make their own reservations.

Lodging reimbursement for the night prior to the beginning of a conference may be allowed when time and/or travel schedules necessitate travel at unreasonable hours or risk an untimely arrival on the first day of the event. Lodging expenses will not be reimbursed for the night following the event, except under circumstances beyond the control of Employees, such as the cancellation of a flight.

Per Diem Meals and Incidental Expenses

The District reimburses meals and incidental expenses up to the approved Board Policy per diem rate of \$50.00 per day. The per diem method does not require receipts for reimbursement. If a conference registration includes meals as part of the fee, then per diem for associated meal(s) is not claimable.

Out-of-Pocket and Miscellaneous Costs

Original receipts for out-of-pocket and miscellaneous costs are required for reimbursement.

Private automobile use (whether being dropped or leaving the car in airport parking) to and from the airport is reimbursed for actual miles driven at the current IRS standard mileage

reimbursement rate in effect at the time of travel. Parking at the airport is reimbursable subject to Supervisory approval.

Reasonably priced services for certain unknown costs, such as taxi, shuttle, bus, parking, etc., must be advanced by the employee.

Other Unauthorized Expenses

Reimbursement is not allowed for items of a personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, movies, entertainment, premium television, snacks, dry-cleaning, spas, gyms, barber, magazines, shoeshine, travel insurance, toiletries, traffic violations, excess baggage and costs for spouse or guest accommodation.

Airlines currently offer a variety of upgrades associated with seating, boarding priority, airline mileage points etc. Sometimes these upgrades are wrapped into the cost of a reimbursable "economy/coach" fare; however, upgrades, beyond the cost of the "economy/coach" fare, are not reimbursable expenditures.

If unauthorized expenses have been paid by the District (i.e. via District credit card) the individual will be required to immediately reimburse the District.

Reimbursement Payment Procedures

Travel Expense Report (TER) forms are used to document travel and business expenses, and to support requests for reimbursement. Original itemized receipts (not photocopies) are required for all items other than per diem meals, and must be submitted. The completed TER form must be submitted to Business Services within 10 working days following the event.

The Business Office will process your claim for reimbursement as quickly as possible upon receipt of the fully completed *Travel Envelope* and forms/receipts as indicated.

All reimbursements for travel must be received prior to June 30th of any fiscal year.

Exceptions to Guidelines

It is the District's desire to adhere to these guidelines. However, there may be occasions when events prevent employees from complying. It is the responsibility of the Employee to prepare a written request for an exception to these guidelines and obtain approval from the Assistant Superintendent/Business Services before submitting the associated TER.

Travel and Conference FAQ

1. If my Per Diem allowance for meals is \$50 per day and I only spent \$47, is it appropriate to claim the \$47 actually spent?

Yes. The Per Diem allowance is the maximum allowable reimbursement. Claims below the Per Diem allowance are appropriate.

2. What if my costs exceed the Per Diem allowance?

Any costs above the Per Diem allowance are the Employee's responsibility. With approval of the Assistant Superintendent, actual costs may be submitted; however, original receipts substantiating the expenditure are required for reimbursement. Exceeding the per Diem will not be approved unless significant circumstances are documented to justify the expense.

3. Can I claim both Per Diem and Actual Costs for the same trip?

Submitted claims must utilize the same method of reimbursement. Therefore, a claim cannot include both Per Diem and Actual Costs for meals expenditures.

4. What is considered an incidental expense?

Incidental expenses are tips or fees given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, etc. You must have an itemized receipt to claim such expenses

5. I am driving to the conference. How is my mileage calculated?

Mileage is calculated from your work site to the conference. If airfare would be less, the District will only reimburse the amount of the lowest economy/coach fare. (BP # 6153)

6. I do not want to pay for my arrangements ahead of time. What options are available to me?

Due to TSA (Transportation Security Administration) rules, employees need to make their own travel reservations and verify their identity. Similarly, hotels usually require a credit card to guarantee the room. TERs will be processed as quickly as possible upon receipt and employees should have a reimbursement check prior to any credit card bills that need to be paid.