

MONROE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FISCAL MANAGEMENT
BOARD POLICY PROCEDURE P7460

TRAVEL POLICY PROCEDURES

General

The district reimburses faculty, staff and students for approved, necessary, and reasonable travel expenses incurred while conducting business for the district. Individuals who receive reimbursement are responsible for verifying funding availability and obtaining necessary approval prior to departure. Upon return, the traveler must make a full accounting to the district within ten (10) days if travel advance funds are used; if not, within thirty (30) days.

Business travel should be conducted at a reasonable cost for achieving the purpose of the trip. Individuals traveling on district business are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses as a prudent person traveling for personal reasons. For the purpose of this document, travel for district business includes all travel, regardless of the source of funds. If the travel expenses are to be paid solely from a funding source agency, that agency's travel reimbursement procedures will apply.

Notification of changes and/or cancellations concerning travel shall be made through the district's accounts payable department a minimum of forty-eight hours prior to the scheduled travel or as prescribed by the hosting agency. Failure to make appropriate and timely cancellations will result in the employee paying all associated costs incurred.

Individuals are not permitted to ride in privately owned aircraft or watercraft to accomplish district business.

The district's insurance carrier does not insure employee's personal vehicles, whether used in business or not. In the event of an accident, the employee's personal auto policy is primary and should address not only damages to a third party, but also address the repair of damages to the employee's car.

Definitions

Travelers are expected to promptly return when district business is completed. If it is more economical to the district for the traveler to remain overnight, then reimbursement can be made if written documentation of this determination is included on the travel request form and approved by the supervisor. The district is not authorized to reimburse staff members for travel expenses made prior to obtaining all necessary approvals unless approved by the Superintendent.

Registration for Conference/Workshop Attendance

Payment for the cost of registration to attend a conference or workshop is often required in advance. A purchase order needs to be initiated for same.

Domestic Travel

Domestic travel is defined as travel within the United States, its territories and possessions and Canada.

To be eligible for reimbursement:

- I. Within the District: (Does not require prior approval.)
 - A. Authorized private car mileage is reimbursable at a rate not to exceed the IRS mileage reimbursement rate.
 - B. Travel between the employee's home and school location is not reimbursable except as follows:

Administrators and other pre-approved personnel will be reimbursed at the IRS mileage reimbursement rate for all necessary travel to and from school events and/or school business that occurs outside the regular school day unless covered by an individual employee contract. The mileage shall be paid to and from the employee's home or Monroe School District boundaries, whichever is less.
 - C. Mileage must be by the shortest route.
 - D. Approved employees whose daily work requires regular or frequent travel from school to school must report mileage on the monthly mileage form (unless a monthly in-district mileage stipend has been authorized by the Superintendent), indicating starting point, destination and date. Separate entries must be made for each day. If school business is transacted in more than one location during one day, each location must be shown on the report. Approved employees are reimbursed at the IRS mileage reimbursement rate unless assigned a district vehicle.
 - E. Mileage expense form must be filed within thirty (30) days of month end to be eligible for reimbursement. Exceptions to this may be approved by the fiscal administrator if the expense form is filed after thirty (30) days but within sixty (60) days of the month end and by the superintendent if greater than sixty (60) days of the month end.
- II. Outside the District, but Within the State:
 - A. All trips must have prior approval except routine business meetings, which are part of an individual basic job function. The request to attend educational meeting/conference form must be submitted to the immediate supervisor at least one (1) week ahead of the date of travel. A list of detailed expenses shall be submitted to the Business Office within ten (10) days following the trip where advance travel funds have been used. If advanced travel funds have not been used; detailed expenses must be submitted within thirty (30) days following the trip to be eligible for reimbursement.

- B. For the purpose of this policy, travel to approved meetings and conferences within a 350-mile radius of Monroe shall be considered as in-state travel including Portland Oregon, Victoria and Vancouver BC and Boise, Idaho.
- C. Travel will be reimbursed at the authorized IRS mileage. Mileage for such travel will be reimbursed from a point of origin within the district to a point of return within the district.

III. Outside the District, Out of State

- A. All trips must be approved in advance by the immediate supervisor and the superintendent. The request to attend educational meeting/conference form must be submitted to the superintendent at least three (3) weeks ahead of the date of travel to enable timely review and possible action by the board of directors. Refer to procedures for submitting the request to attend on the face of the form.
- B. The total cost of personal car travel must not exceed the cost of airfare based on the lowest regular coach fare available for the location of travel from standard commercial air carrier, transportation costs to and from the airport and end destination.

Air Travel

Consistent with reasonable business planning, air travel accommodations must be made at the lowest convenient fare. Reimbursement of first-class air travel is not permitted.

Unused airline tickets or any unused portion of an airline ticket remains the property of the district and MUST be returned to the accounts payable office immediately upon return to the district.

Shuttles/Taxis/Parking

The least expensive mode of ground transportation to reach the destination should be taken, considering time, practicality and availability. Many hotels offer complimentary shuttle service, which should be used when available.

The cost of taxis to and from places of business, hotels, airports, or railroad stations in connection with district activities is reimbursable only when more economical modes of transportation are not available or are inconvenient or inconsistent with business requirements.

The actual cost of parking is reimbursable. Travelers should seek to obtain the most reasonable parking accommodations consistent with safety and travel timelines.

Rental Cars

The use of rental cars is permitted when commercial transportation facilities either are not available or their use is impractical or more expensive. The size of the rental car should be the least expensive model consistent with the number of travelers and the purpose of the trip. The rental car should be refueled prior to returning it to the agency to avoid the refueling charge.

Car rental arrangements should be made through a district-approved travel agency. These expenses need to be covered by the traveler at the time of use, and pre-approved/legitimate district expenses will be reimbursed. In the event that emergency conditions impact an employee and car rental expenses are incurred which haven't been pre-approved, reimbursement will be based on an evaluation by the superintendent or his/her designee.

The district insures the financial risk of collision/accident exposure in the same manner it insures its own vehicles. Therefore, none of the insurance coverage offered by car rental agencies should be purchased while traveling on district business in the United States.

Lodging

The district will allow hotel/motel accommodations for comfortable, reasonably priced lodging. The traveler will secure educational or corporate discounts when available. Purchase orders for lodging shall be used whenever possible. If a purchase order is not issued, travelers are responsible for paying hotel lodging at the time of use. Travelers are responsible for paying miscellaneous hotel expenses at the time of use and only pre-approved/legitimate expenses will be reimbursed.

The district will reimburse single-room rate accommodations only. This single-room rate shall also apply when a district employee is sharing room accommodations with a non-district person. Multiple occupancy shall be permitted when district employees desire to share room accommodations. Each employee submits an employee reimbursement voucher or his/her share of the expense. The original or a copy of the hotel bill must be attached.

Lodging for stays within King, Skagit and Snohomish Counties requires approval of the Superintendent.

Reimbursement for lodging expense is not authorized when a district traveler does not incur expenses at a commercial lodging facility.

Meals

Reimbursement for meals will only be made after the traveler is in travel status for three hours (An employee is in Travel Status when at least one overnight stay is authorized) and shall not exceed the following unless travel extends beyond twenty-four (24) continuous hours for which a per diem allocation is applicable based on the U.S. General Services Administration posted rates for each travel location at the time of travel.

Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable. Original receipts are required for any one meal over \$10.00 except when the per diem allocation is applicable and used.

Under the following conditions, supervisors may authorize reimbursement for meals at meetings or formal training sessions when the meetings or formal training sessions are away from the employee's or official's regular work place regardless of travel status and without regard to the three-hour threshold rule:

1. The purpose of the meeting is to conduct official district business or to provide formal training; and
2. The meals are an integral part of the meeting or training session.

District Managed Retreats and Conferences

The Superintendent or Fiscal Officer shall approve any contract for district managed retreats and conferences. Meal costs for such retreats or conferences shall not exceed the U.S. General Services Administration posted rate per participant, including tax and gratuity but excluding meeting refreshments, without prior approval by the Superintendent. In no case can the district pay for alcoholic beverages.

Gratuities

Travelers will be reimbursed for reasonable gratuities. When paid, gratuities (tips) should reflect the prevailing custom for that particular service (e.g. meals shall not exceed 15%). Gratuities for meals shall be included as part of the cost of the meal. All other tips should be reported as “miscellaneous” on the employee reimbursement voucher and should be accompanied by a brief description, i.e. porter, bellhop, etc.

Travel Advance

Travel advances may be obtained for meals and lodging for overnight or out-of-state travel. The request for travel advance is included on the request to attend form. The amount of travel advance will be no more than eighty percent (80%) of the estimated “out-of-pocket” expenses.

Travel advances are to be accounted for within ten (10) calendar days of the end of the trip by submitting the employee expense form to the fiscal department. It is the traveler’s responsibility to make a full accounting to the district. Failure to submit a completed employee expense form within the prescribed period will constitute a lien against the employee’s pay and may result in the denial of future advance payments.

In certain conditions the use of a district credit card may be a more appropriate means to handle travel expenses. Employees may request the use of a credit card in lieu of a travel advance.

Personal Property Losses

The cost or value of personal property lost or stolen while traveling is not reimbursable.

Vacations in Conjunction with Business Travel

Occasionally, travelers may plan vacations to coincide with district business travel. When that occurs, the district traveler is expected to maintain accurate records of the time and expenses relating to personal or incremental costs of travel versus district business. The distinction must be drawn at the point when the business purpose, i.e. the meeting, seminar, has commenced or been completed.

Receipts

Receipts for all expenditures are recommended and are required for all travel reimbursements except:

1. Meals when the per diem allocation is applicable and used
2. Parking under \$10.00 per day
3. Mileage
4. Gratuities for porter, bellhop, etc.
5. Taxis when receipts are not provided

In the event an employee misplaces the receipts, he/she may complete an affidavit affirming the expenses. The affidavit will suffice as verification of authorized expenditures. The administration may restrict the affidavit process if it appears to be in the best interests of the district.