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REQUIRED ACTION:

- Employees are responsible for reading and following this policy.
- Managers are required to have every employee and new hire read and acknowledge this policy.

DEFINITIONS:

Employee: **An individual who is employed by and paid on permanent or temporary payroll of the state or a person performing assigned duties for the Agency, but not paid on the payroll of the state (non-state employee).**

Subsistence: The amount of funds reimbursed for meals and lodging.

Residence: The fixed or permanent domicile of an employee that can be reasonably justified as a bona fide place of actual residence.

Mileage Allowance: A rate per mile which is charged in lieu of actual expenses of operating a privately- owned motor vehicle.

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

To provide guidance to South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) employees on the subject of reimbursement of travel-related expenditures.

GUIDELINES

I. Travel Request Authorization

1. A Travel Request Authorization (TRA) form (ADMIN-001A) must be completed and approved in advance of departure. Supporting documentation should be attached to the TRA form. Any deviation from these procedures may disallow the travel reimbursement. This form must be completed when:
   a. traveling out-of-state;
   b. traveling overnight;
   c. purchasing an airline ticket;
   d. a registration fee is required to attend a conference or seminar;
   e. renting a vehicle from a company (Enterprise, Hertz, etc…)
   f. seeking reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle; or
   g. at the direction of a supervisor or director.
2. All TRA forms must be submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor and/or director for approval. With the exception of non-overnight, in-state travel, forms must then be submitted to the Chief Financial Officer or designee for approval.
3. All out-of-state travel must also be approved by the President and Executive Director in addition to the Chief Financial Officer or designee and an employee's supervisor and/or director. Procedures also apply to non-state employees and non-CHE employees traveling on behalf of the CHE.
4. In-state overnight travel must be submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor or director for approval. The Chief Financial Officer or designee has authority to approve in-state travel for employees if hotel lodging is not over the federal lodging rate and cost of anticipated travel does not exceed $1,000. Otherwise, the President and Executive Director must also approve the travel.

5. Overnight travel that will exceed the federal lodging rate must be submitted for approval to the office director, and Chief Financial Officer, prior to the trip. Procedures also apply to non-state employees and non-CHE employees traveling on behalf of the CHE. Federal lodging rates are found at www.gsa.gov.
6. If overnight travel exceeds the federal lodging rate, a justification must be attached to the TRA form explaining why that particular hotel was selected. Use the Comptroller General's "Approval for Exceeding Travel Expense Limits" form (ADMIN-001C). The traveler should contact at least three hotels within the vicinity to secure the lowest lodging rate. Acceptable justifications for exceeding the federal lodging rate are listed below:
   a. The traveler requested that the hotel provide lodging accommodations at the federal lodging rate and the request was denied. Reasonable attempts were made to find a hotel in the vicinity that accepts the federal lodging rate.
   b. The hotel is the site of the event or the conference. The hotel is holding rooms for the event or conference at a special rate for state employees.
   c. The cost to travel between a hotel offering the federal lodging rate and the conference site exceeds the difference between the conference hotel and the federal rate.
   d. The traveler is sharing the room with another participant and splitting the lodging cost.
   e. The hotel selection is based on safety reasons, such as interior vs exterior entryways to the hotel room.
7. With prior approval from the office director, employees may take a rental vehicle to their home and leave for business travel from their home if it is more cost effective to do so.

II. General Rules for Reimbursement

1. <u>Subsistence</u>

   a. *Meal Allowances* – Meals may be reimbursed for actual expenditures incurred up to the state's meal allowance when an employee is traveling on official state business and is in travel status (more than ten miles from official headquarters and/or residence). Employees will not be reimbursed for meals if the hotel or conference at which they are staying or attending provides meals as part of registration or stay costs. In addition, alcohol costs will not be reimbursed. In determining the maximum amount of subsistence for meals which may be reimbursed, the following time schedule must be adhered to:

MEALS	DEPART BEFORE	RETURN AFTER	IN-STATE	OUT-OF-STATE
Breakfast	6:30 AM	11:00 AM	$8.00	$10.00
Lunch	11:00 AM	1:30 PM	$10.00	$15.00
Dinner	5:15 PM	8:30 PM	$17.00	$25.00
Daily Maximum Allowance			$35.00	$50.00

2. Travel by Auto

   a. *General Rules* – Employees shall be reimbursed for use of a personal vehicle on official business per mile at the rate provided by current IRS rules as directed by the State Comptroller General's Office. To receive reimbursement, travel must exceed 10 miles one way from the employee's home or from the CHE headquarters. Auto travel should be by the most direct route practicable.

   b. *Carpooling* – When multiple staff are attending the same conference or event, they should carpool together and only one employee should include auto estimate costs on his or her TRA form. If travel requires employees to leave the CHE headquarters before 7:00 a.m. to make the event, then the employees may travel separately from their residences and receive reimbursement at the lesser of actual mileage using their personal vehicles or the cost of renting a vehicle with Enterprise.

   c. *Mileage between Residence and Headquarters* – Mileage between an employee's home and his or her place of employment is not subject to reimbursement. However, when an employee leaves on a business trip directly from his or her home, and does not report to the CHE headquarters, the employee shall be eligible for reimbursement beginning at his or her residence.

3. Transportation
   Reimbursement may be made for air, bus, boat, train, taxi and rideshare fares, and for rental cars. Tip reimbursement is not allowed. Authorization for rental cars must be obtained on the TRA form when combined with air travel. Reimbursement for rental cars shall include the basic rate only; additional charges shall not be reimbursed.

4. Travel Completion
   After travel, the employee must complete a Travel Support Document (ADMIN-001D) in order to be reimbursed. The Travel Support Document must be signed by the office director and submitted along with the approved TRA form and required receipts to the Office of Fiscal Affairs. See Section III.1. If an employee has questions about the document, the employee should ask his/her supervisor or the Office of Fiscal Affairs staff.

III. Special Rules for Reimbursement

1. Receipts
   Receipts for all expenditures except for meals shall be attached to the Travel Support Document.

2. Driving in Lieu of Airline Travel
   When the most economical means of transportation is an airline flight and the employee elects to travel by personal vehicle, mileage reimbursement will be restricted to 1) the price of airfare for a coach ticket, 2) vicinity mileage incurred on official business in lieu of using a taxi, 3) parking fees equal to that which would have been incurred if a car had been parked at an airport, and 4) subsistence based on date and time airline connections would have been made for departure and return. Any period of time exceeding these guidelines will be at the employee's expense and no subsistence will be paid.

3. Guests Accompanying Employee
   If a guest accompanies an employee on an authorized business trip, only those expenses which may be directly attributed to the employee may be reimbursed.

4. <u>Special Circumstances</u>
If an employee feels that travel regulations need to be addressed for special circumstances, the employee's office director should prepare a memo to the Chief Financial Officer explaining the circumstances. The Chief Financial Officer will contact the Comptroller General's Office.

   If approval is obtained, the employee and office director will be provided with a copy of the approval letter, which should be attached to the related travel claim.

5. <u>Travel Split Between Two Fiscal Years</u>
When travel begins in one fiscal year and ends in the next fiscal year, two separate Travel Support Documents *must* be submitted since expenses for the years must be separated.

6. <u>Weekend Travel</u>
Travel incurred earlier or later than required for business purposes must be fully explained as to the cost savings to the state in an attached statement by the employee.

7. <u>President and Executive Director Business Expenses</u>
The President and Executive Director may receive reimbursement for business expenses while performing his or her duties, provided that receipts are presented when seeking reimbursement and justification is submitted to document the time, place, and purpose of the expense involved.

   The Department of Administration has approved the following guidelines for reimbursement:

   a. Amounts and descriptions (i.e. lunch, dinner, etc.) of each separate expenditure must be provided.

   b. The time and place of each expenditure must be provided.

   c. The business purpose of each activity, including a description of any business benefit derived or expected and the nature of any business discussions must be described.

   d. The business relationship of other individuals must be established by providing names, title, occupations, or other pertinent information sufficient to establish the relationship.

   e. No expenses shall be allowed for meetings with other state employees, board members, or legislative officials.

APPROVED BY:

SC Commission on Higher Education President and Executive Director

Date: December 13, 2024