



# Travel Policy and Procedures

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**OAK RIDGE SCHOOLS TRAVEL POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL**

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## POLICY STATEMENT

In order to best utilize the resources available to the school district, employees are expected to minimize the costs of necessary business travel. This policy is designed to provide a framework to ensure proper stewardship of public money and establish guidance for proper pre-approval and maintaining a valid audit trail.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

District employees should make conservative selections in their choice of lodging and transportation. *Due to the nature of travel and our responsibility to the public, these expenditures are scrutinized more heavily than other types of expenditures.*

Employees will utilize economy and practicality when traveling at school district expense; thoroughly document all expenses incurred; and will complete all necessary travel authorization and reimbursement reports according to the guidelines established in this document.

The limits on travel expenses as set forth in this document are maximum amounts. By prior arrangement, an employee may accept partial (less than allowed) reimbursement.

To ensure transparency, proper sales tax exemption, and that the District receives the most advantageous rebates, **employees are not to pay for registrations, hotel, car rental, or airfare travel with their personal funds.** Exceptions may be made in emergency situations at the approval of an Executive Director or the Superintendent.

It is the responsibility of the employee to adhere to these regulations. Training and guidance are available from the Business Office upon request.

# AUTHORIZATIONS & REIMBURSEMENTS

## TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION & TRAVEL EXPENSE STATEMENTS

All travel requires advanced authorization of the Superintendent or designee (BOE Policy 2.804). This establishes required pre-approval for the expense as well as approval of the employee's absence from their daily duties.

- All travel must be approved before any arrangements are made. Modifications to requested travel may be required at the request of Executive Directors, the Finance Director, or the Superintendent.
- Reimbursements should be requested as quickly as practical upon return.

### Overnight Travel:

- **Travel Authorization Requests (TAR)** are required for all employees with the exception of the Superintendent, Board of Education members, and Executive Directors. All pre-travel documents (Purchase Order with TAR if applicable) should be signed, approved, and submitted to the Business Office before commencing travel.
- **Travel Expense Reimbursement Requests** are required for all overnight travel by staff (including the Superintendent, Board of Education members, and Executive Directors). Payment should be issued against the Purchase Order entered for the travel. *Important Note: Conference Agenda Information should be attached to TRR.*

### One-Day Travel:

- **One-Day Professional Leave Request** forms are required for all employees with the exception of the Superintendent, Board of Education members, and Executive Directors for conferences that do not require overnight travel. Registration fees should be paid via check request.
- **Travel Expense Reimbursement Requests** are required for all one-day travel by staff (including Superintendent, Board of Education members, and Executive Directors). Reimbursement should be paid on a check request for the mileage and eligible meal.

### Virtual Training

- Virtual training does not constitute travel. No reimbursement is assumed, and no travel authorization is required. Any registration fee for a virtual training should be paid via check request.

# TRANSPORTATION

## OVERARCHING REGULATIONS

**Travel Within Tennessee:** Historically, travel reimbursements within the state are similar regardless of vehicle choice. As such, travelers have the option to use their personal vehicle or utilize a rental vehicle per the guidelines to follow.

**Travel Outside of Tennessee:** Transportation should be arranged in the most cost-effective manner practical. A cost comparison should be utilized to determine the most cost-effective travel option. All potential costs, including additional hotel nights or additional per-diem, should be considered. *Employees who opt to take an alternate or more expensive form of transportation as a manner of personal preference must assume any extra expense incurred.* This may take the form of reduced reimbursement or the employee reimbursing the District. Likewise, employees who opt to take an alternate form of transportation other than the one specified by the Executive Director are not entitled to reimbursement. (For example, a group traveling in a van, but one employee chooses to drive alone. The lone employee is not eligible for reimbursement.)

## TRANSPORTATION – PUBLIC (AIR, TRAIN, BUS)

- The School District will pay the actual costs of economy, main cabin, or regular fare for public transportation by air, train, or bus. Any upgrades of class (Business or 1<sup>st</sup> Class), seat selection fees, or boarding preference fees will be the responsibility of the employee and will not be reimbursed. For flights that do not include a checked bag in the price, the School District will pay for one checked bag. Any additional baggage fees will be the responsibility of the employee and will not be reimbursed.
- Expenses in traveling to and from the public carrier will be reimbursed such as reasonable taxi/Uber fare or parking the employee's personal car at the carrier's location plus round-trip mileage. The most economical parking choice should be selected. Documentation of charges must be provided to receive reimbursement.

## TRANSPORTATION-AUTOMOBILE

**School District Vehicle:** District vehicle usage is encouraged for groups of 4 or more attending the same conference but is otherwise optional and at the discretion of the Executive Director authorizing the travel. When a district vehicle is used, the District will pay only the cost of actual expenses for gasoline. If an employee uses a district vehicle for travel, no mileage reimbursement will be issued. If an employee purchases fuel for a district vehicle while on travel, the fuel receipt should be submitted for the employee to be reimbursed.

- **Rental Vehicle:** Oak Ridge Schools has collaborated with Enterprise Holdings (Enterprise & National), taking advantage of the State of Tennessee contract rate which includes a full damage waiver, 24/7 Roadside Assistance, tax exemption, and direct billing to the District. Use of other rental companies is allowable only in unforeseen circumstances or when Enterprise/National is not an option. If a rental vehicle is used, the cost of the authorized rental vehicle will be paid by the District, and the employee will be reimbursed for any fuel purchase(s) that are made based on actual receipts provided.
  - Individuals choosing to rent a vehicle from other rental companies as a matter of personal preference do so at their own expense.
  - If required due to distance, rental vehicle costs will be covered by the District for the dates of the conference plus one travel day for departure and one travel day for return at a maximum.
  - Employees choosing to utilize a rental for additional days are responsible for reimbursing the District for the additional costs.
  - Additional travel days required due to automobile travel rather than air travel, when automobile travel is selected as a matter of personal preference, shall be taken as annual leave or other appropriate leave.
  - Additional costs incurred when automobile travel is selected as a matter of personal preference shall not be reimbursed. Reimbursement shall be made based on the cost comparison of most cost-effective means of travel.
- **Personal Vehicle:** The District will reimburse employees a standard rate for official travel by personal vehicle at the prevailing IRS mileage reimbursement rate based on the actual driving distance by the shortest, most direct route. Employees who use their personal vehicle for travel will be reimbursed only for mileage; they will not be reimbursed for any fuel purchase(s) that are made.
  - Reimbursement shall be based on mileage obtained from internet mileage tools such as MapQuest or Google Maps as well as the ORS Mileage Reimbursement Chart. Attach printed maps and mileage sheets to travel claims for complete documentation when seeking reimbursement.
  - Travel between all district locations shall be reimbursed based on the established ORS Mileage Reimbursement Chart.
  - Mileage reimbursement for travel outside the district shall be based on the actual location of the employee at the beginning and ending of the travel. This may be the employee's work location, their home, or a combination of the

two. Please use actual mileage driven on the travel reimbursement request document and indicate the beginning and ending locations using online mapping software.

- Voluntary attendance to any work-related function is not eligible for mileage reimbursement. (e.g. Traveling to football games when not required, attending staff parties, visiting HR for personal reasons, etc.)
- If a personal vehicle is used by two or more official travelers on the same trip, only the traveler owning or having custody of the vehicle will be reimbursed for mileage at the rate outlined above.
- Additional travel days required due to automobile travel rather than air travel, when automobile travel is selected as a matter of personal preference, shall be taken as annual leave or other appropriate leave.
- Additional costs incurred when automobile travel is selected as a matter of personal preference shall not be reimbursed. Reimbursement shall be made based on the cost comparison of the most cost-effective means of travel.
- Traffic Violations, Fines, and Accidents: Employees will not be reimbursed for any fines for traffic violations or parking tickets. Costs incurred to personal vehicles due to accidents, or the cost of repairs due to breakdowns of personal vehicles will not be reimbursed to employees.

# LODGING

## REIMBURSEMENT/PAYMENT

- Lodging will be based upon the locality, purpose for travel, and availability of accommodations. Reasonableness and economy should be exercised by the traveler in all instances.
- Lodging at the Conference Hotel will be permitted.
- Upgrades/Suites/Special Requests: In the event the employee desires alternative upgrades in lodging, the employee will reimburse the District for the difference in cost between a standard room rate and the upgrade/special request. The amount to be reimbursed by the employee will be limited to the difference in the room rates and will not include any related taxes or other charges on a pro-rata basis.
- Additional mandatory fees charged by a hotel (mandatory parking charges, resort fees, etc.) will be covered but should be taken into consideration when determining reasonableness. Optional internet charges will be covered at the discretion of the Executive Director authorizing travel. Optional charges, such as optional valet parking, are not reimbursable.
- Most hotels do not honor tax exemption when using a personal credit card for payment. As such, lodging should always be booked through ORS and not placed on a personal credit card.
- Travelers *should* utilize a personal credit card for any incidental expenses that may be charged to the room during their stay. A folio(statement) should be requested upon checkout to verify charges have been assigned to the correct credit card.



# MEALS AND INCIDENTALS

## FIXED ALLOWANCE PER-DIEM FOR MEALS AND INCIDENTALS (M&I) FOR TRAVEL REQUIRING OVERNIGHT STAY

- The District will provide reimbursement to employees based on a maximum per diem rate for employee travel, which includes a fixed allowance for meals and incidental expenses regardless of actual expenses (M & I). The US General Services Administration sets reimbursement rates on October 1 each year. This daily rate, or fraction thereof, is payable to the employee **without itemization of expenses or receipts**. Incidentals are intended to include miscellaneous costs associated with travel such as tips for baggage handling, etc.
- The applicable maximum per diem rate for each calendar day of travel shall be determined by the location of lodging for the traveler. **Important note: Remember to reduce the M & I daily rate for any meal(s) included in conference registrations, provided by the Government, or otherwise provided at no cost to the employee (such as complimentary breakfast provided by hotel).** No cost shall be claimed which is not incurred.
- The per diem rate to be reimbursed to the employee for meals and incidentals is only applicable when overnight travel is involved. The GSA website contains specific meal allowance amounts for each lodging location – these amounts should be used for subtracting meals that are not reimbursable.
- Employees can agree to accept a lesser reimbursement amount. If this is chosen, a notation should be made on the TAR and the TRR for audit.

### **Day of Departure and Return M&I Per-Diem Reimbursement**

Reimbursement for meals and incidentals for the day of departure and day of return when overnight travel is required shall be up to three-fourths of the appropriate M & I rate prescribed for the actual lodging location.

**Meal allowances will not be provided for meal events that are included in conference registrations, included with the hotel cost (complimentary breakfast), provided by the government, or are otherwise provided at no cost to the employee.**

- M&I allowance must be adjusted for meals included in conference registrations, provided by the Government, or are otherwise provided at no cost to the employee (such as complimentary breakfast provided by hotel).

- Exceptions may be made for documented medical conditions requiring a special diet but will not be made for matters of personal preference. (Medically necessary dietary conditions should be noted on the TAR.)
- The daily per-diem allowance will be reduced by deducting the appropriate amount shown at [www.gsa.gov/mie](http://www.gsa.gov/mie). For meals provided on the day of departure and the last day of travel, you must deduct the allocated meal cost from the decreased M&IE rate.

### **One-Day Travel M&I Per-diem Reimbursement**

Reimbursement for employees on one-day travel status with no overnight stay will be at the single meal per-diem rate with no receipt(s) required. *(Does not apply when meal is included in conference registration, provided by the government, or is otherwise provided at no cost to the employee.)*

### **Meal Purchase(s) Responsibility**

All meal purchases will be the responsibility of the employee (employee will use personal funds) during school-related travel and no receipts for meal purchases will be submitted for reimbursement. The appropriate per-diem amount will be claimed and paid to the employee upon submission and approval of Travel Reimbursement Request and TAR.

Staff and Board members in possession of a personal ORS credit card should restrict their use to their individual travel-related expenses – however, **meal purchases should not be placed on ORS credit cards** due to the M&I per-diem policy.

# REGULATIONS

## EMPLOYEE LEAVE AND TIME COMPENSATION

- Professional Leave will be entered in Skyward Software by all staff for any days requiring their absence from their office/building. This will be audited and reminders sent via email.
- Travel is voluntary and does not add to the hours worked for the purposes of accumulating leave, compensation, or overtime. Hourly or part-time employees are paid for time according to their contract, up to the maximum of 8 hours per day for the time they are on travel status, up to a maximum of 8 hours/day and 40 hours/week.  
Under no circumstances can travel cause an “overtime” situation, regardless of the number of hours traveled. If this is a hardship on the employee, this should be expressed to the supervisor so that travel is minimized or eliminated.

## CANCELLATIONS BY EMPLOYEE

To ensure the best use of public funds, trip cancellations are highly discouraged except in the event of extenuating circumstances beyond the traveler’s control due to a serious, unpredictable, and unavoidable personal reason. This is at the discretion of the Executive Director authorizing travel.

**Individuals choosing to cancel their attendance due to personal or avoidable reasons will be responsible for reimbursing the District for non-refundable costs associated with the approved travel.** This reimbursement will not be required if there is ample time for a replacement traveler to attend in the original traveler’s absence.

# SCHOOL RELATED TRAVEL

## CLUBS, SPORTS, CLASSES

Travel for which there is a cost share between an individual school, school group, or sport and the District, the preceding guidelines for any travel expenses being paid by the District must be followed. As these are very situational and vary greatly from group to group, **the Business Services Specialist in the Business Office should be contacted during the planning phases to ensure proper procedure is followed.** Overarching guidelines are as follows:

- A travel authorization (one-day or TAR) is required to authorize the portion of travel being paid by the District.
- A travel reimbursement request is required to receive any reimbursement of agreed upon travel expenses.
- Any agreed upon reduced reimbursement should be notated on the authorization request and the reimbursement request.
- For one-day travel lasting longer than 12 hours, such as coaching an all-day event out of town, full day per-diem is allowable upon the Executive Director's approval.

# PROCEDURES

## OVERARCHING GUIDELINES

The following overarching policies & guidelines should be followed by all employees.

- All travel must be approved **BEFORE** any arrangements are made. TARs and Purchase Orders are both acceptable forms of pre-approval.
- Employees should work with their Administrative Assistant, Bookkeeper, or other authorized individual within their school/department when planning & scheduling travel.
- All employees should submit claims for reimbursement as soon as possible following completion of travel (within 30 days per Board Policy 2.804). In accordance with Internal Revenue Service guidance (IRS Publication 463), reimbursement paid sixty (60) days after the date of travel may be considered as taxable income.

## ONE-DAY TRAVEL

- A One-Day Professional Leave Request form should be completed in Adobe and submitted for electronic approval.
  - Not required for Board of Education members, the Superintendent, or Executive Directors.
- A check request should be entered into Skyward for any registration fee. Please attach a copy of the approved One-Day Professional Leave Request form to the check request along with the registration information.
- Upon completion of travel, a Travel Reimbursement Request should be completed, and a check request entered into Skyward. Please ensure the following are attached:
  - 1) Approved One-Day Professional Leave Request form
  - 2) Travel Reimbursement Request
  - 3) Original gas receipts - only if using district owned or rental vehicle.

## OVERNIGHT TRAVEL

- A Travel Authorization Request (TAR) should be completed in Adobe and submitted electronically. A copy of the conference agenda should be attached to all Requests.
  - Not required for Board of Education members, the Superintendent, or Executive Directors but can be used for pre-approval if desired.
- The Business Services Specialist will work with the building/department level contact to make travel arrangements after approval is obtained for all employees except those who hold an ORS travel credit card.
  - This can be accomplished directly by the Business Services Specialist or by checking out the District travel credit card after approvals have been secured.

Approval(s) or POs must be provided to check out the credit card. Documentation of completed/scheduled reservations must be provided to the Business Services Specialist for tracking and reconciling the credit card.

- Should the Business Services Specialist be unavailable for time-sensitive scheduling, please reach out to the Purchasing Specialist or the Business Services Coordinator for immediate assistance.
- For all employees, overnight travel requests should be entered on a Purchase Order with the employee listed as the vendor. Individual line items should be entered with estimated costs for each line item and the anticipated “pay-to” vendor for that line item, including costs for registration, employee reimbursement amounts, hotel costs, airline costs, etc. See example below:

*VENDOR:*  
VAN DYKE, JENIFER H.

*SHIP TO:*  
OAK RIDGE SCHOOLS BUSINESS OFFICE  
304 NEW YORK AVENUE  
OAK RIDGE, TN 37830

QUANTITY	UNIT	DESCRIPTION OF ITEMS OR MATERIALS	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT
1	each	Registration Fee for TN Spring Fiscal Workshop: vendor: TN Department of Education	35.00000	35.00
1	each	Lodging for TN Spring Fiscal Workshop: vendor: Music Road Hotel	130.00000	130.00
1	each	Estimated Travel Reimbursement for TN Spring Fiscal workshop: vendor: Jenifer Van Dyke	137.50000	137.50

- Upon completion of travel, submit the hotel folio (statement) to Business Services for verification of correct credit card charges and tax-exempt status charges.
- A Travel Reimbursement Request should be completed and submitted to the Business Office and will be paid against the Purchase Order. If multiple travelers attended the same conference, a separate TRR must be filled out by each traveler. Please ensure the following are attached:
  - 1) Attach all original itemized receipts for items due for reimbursement. Credit card payment slips will not be accepted except in circumstances outside the traveler’s control approved by the Executive Director. (Note: Receipts for meal purchases are not required – per diem rates apply.)
  - 2) All signatures must be original. No stamped or copied signatures will be permitted. (Digital signatures and approvals are encouraged & allowable.)
  - 3) Attach a copy of the conference agenda.
  - 4) Attach a copy of online maps showing mileage.

## CLARIFICATION FOR TRAVEL CREDIT CARD HOLDERS

General policy & guidelines should be followed by all employees; however, slight processing variations exist for those employees who are authorized credit card holders.

### **One Day Travel:**

The procedures remain the same as one-day travel for non-card holders.

### **Overnight Travel:**

Approval still must be shown: a TAR or PO must be completed prior to scheduling travel.

The traveler and/or their Administrative Assistant have the ability to schedule the card holder's hotel room, flights, and other items per the list below. As the District maintains a comprehensive travel list and is responsible for auditing travel expenses, please provide the following to the Business Services Specialist:

- A copy of all flight information
- A copy of the hotel information
- A copy of the conference information

To ensure that the District is billed correctly, please schedule all car rentals through the Business Services Specialist (except for emergency situations).

Upon completion of travel, please follow the same procedures listed above for reimbursement.

### **Qualified ORS Travel Credit Card Charges:**

- Hotel – Overnight charges for cardholder
- Flight for cardholder
- Baggage Fees
- Gas for rental vehicle/district vehicle
- Event/Conference Registration
- Membership fee with Event Registration
- Parking (hotel, event, airport)
- Taxi/Uber/Subway/Metro
- Rental car – Emergency situations (please use district billing in normal circumstances)