TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
1701 North Congress Ave. • Austin, Texas 78701-1494 • 512 463-9734 • 512 463-9838 FAX • www.tea.state.tx.us
Michael L. Williams
Commissioner

Summary of Current Texas Travel Reimbursement Guidelines

Mileage, lodging, and meal reimbursement rates published by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts apply to all grants funded by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for individuals on travel status.

Mileage

Effective January 1, 2013, through August 31, 2013, the automobile mileage reimbursement rate (in-state and out-of-state) for personal automobiles is 56.5 cents per mile or local policy, whichever is less.

Travelers are required to calculate mileage by one of the following two methods:

- Odometer reading (point-to-point method)
- Electronic mapping source (such as that on www.Mapquest.com or any other online mapping service). If this method is chosen, the traveler must print out the driving directions provided by the site and attach them to the travel voucher.

Travelers are required to select the shortest and most economical route but may justify the selection of another route if it was chosen for safety reasons and specific justification of the selection is given.

To assist employees in documenting their travel, some districts have developed mileage charts listing the distance between various duty points within the district. Such a chart should be developed in accordance with local policy and must be based on one of the two approved methods of mileage calculation (odometer reading or electronic mapping source). Travelers whose districts have developed such a chart are not required to calculate their mileage by either the odometer reading or electronic mapping source method; reference to the district's mileage chart is sufficient.

Meals and Lodging

The following maximum meal and lodging reimbursement rates apply to in-state and out-of-state travel.

- If local policy restricts travel, per diem, and other travel expenses to a rate less than state law, the applicant must budget and request reimbursement from the grant *at the lesser rate*.
- If local policy exceeds the maximum recovery rate specified in the Appropriations Bill, then the difference must be paid from state or local funds, i.e., not from grant funds.
- *Travel allowances,* in which the per diem is paid to the employee regardless of the amount actually expended, are not allowable.

Summary of Rates

The following table summarizes reimbursement rates for in-state and out-of-state travel.

In-State Meals and Lodging	Refer to the federal Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates. For cities not listed, apply the rate for the county in which the city is located. If the county is not listed, the rates are as follows: Lodging in-state: Up to $77/night Meals in-state: Up to $46/day
Out-of-State Meals and Lodging	Refer to the federal Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates. For areas not listed, use the rate for the nearest city. When locating the nearest city, it is permissible to cross state lines.

In-State Travel

The Federal Rate Schedule is used for reimbursement of in-state meal and lodging expenditures. Because the reimbursement rates can change, it is recommended that travelers print the page at the time reservations are made and submit the printout with the travel reimbursement voucher as a supporting document.

Follow these steps to access meal and lodging reimbursement information and rates through the Texas State Comptroller's website.

1. Select the "Finances & Economy" tab at the top of the home page.
2. Scroll down to the "Fiscal Management" section, and select "State of Texas Travel Information."
3. In the "Travel Rates" section, select "Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates."
4. On the page that opens, locate the traveler's destination by clicking Texas on the US map.
5. Clicking Texas brings up a list of Texas cities and counties. Find reimbursement rates as follows:
    - If the Texas city to which you are traveling is not listed, check the county list. If the county to which you are traveling is listed, use the rate given for that county.
    - If the Texas county to which you are traveling is not listed, use the current maximum rate for lodging and for meals, as specified in the General Appropriations Act and on the Comptroller's website.

In-State Day Trips

In accordance with local policy, an employee whose duties require the employee to travel outside the employee's designated headquarters, without an overnight stay away from the employee's headquarters, may be reimbursed for the actual cost of the employee's meals, not to exceed $36. Travel must begin at one duty point and end at another; regardless of the time of day of the travel, mileage to and from the employee's home or location other than a duty point is not allowable to be charged to the grant. In the absence of a local policy, no reimbursement shall be made from the grant for this purpose.

"Designated headquarters" is defined as the area within the boundaries of the city or town in which a traveler's place of employment is located. *Travel must take the employee outside*

designated headquarters for more than six consecutive hours; the cost of meals for travel lasting less than six consecutive hours is not allowable to be charged to the grant.

Out-of-State Travel

An employee who travels within or outside the continental United States shall be reimbursed for the actual cost of lodging and meals. However, the reimbursements out of grant funds may not exceed the maximum meals and lodging rates based on federal travel regulations that are issued by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. (See instructions for locating online federal meal and lodging rates given in the “In-State Travel” section, preceding.) If local policy reimburses at a *lesser* amount, you must comply with local policy. If local policy reimburses at a *greater* amount, you must pay the difference from local or state funds (not from grant funds).

If the out-of-state city to which you are traveling is not listed on the Federal Rate Schedule, find the city on the list that is nearest geographically to your travel destination and apply the lodging and meal rates given for that city. When determining the nearest listed city, it is permissible to cross state lines. (For example, if travel takes you to northern New Mexico, the nearest listed city might be a city in Colorado rather than another location in New Mexico.) If the travel destination is equidistant from more than one other listed city, rates from the lowest listed city must be used.

For both in-state and out-of-state travel, the traveler may apply funds available for meal reimbursement (i.e., up to the rate specified in the Federal Rate Schedule or $46, depending on whether the destination is specified in the Federal Rate Schedule) toward lodging. For instance, if the traveler chooses for the sake of convenience to stay in a hotel that costs $10 more a night than the allowable maximum for lodging, the traveler can apply $10 of the maximum available for meal reimbursement toward the lodging rate. If the traveler chooses to apply meal reimbursement to lodging, the maximum meal reimbursement rate is reduced by the same amount (applying $10 of the meal reimbursement to lodging would reduce the meal reimbursement by $10).

NOTE: The opposite case does not apply; that is, a traveler may *not* reduce the amount spent on lodging and increase the amount spent on meals. Under no circumstances may a traveler be reimbursed from grant funds for meals at a rate that exceeds the rate given on the Federal Rate Schedule (or $46, depending on whether the destination is specified in the Federal Rate Schedule).

Hotel Taxes

School districts are usually exempt from Texas state sales tax on lodging but are not exempt from any city taxes or other taxes imposed for lodging. Employees may be reimbursed for applicable taxes.

Travel Allowances

Travel allowances for in-state and out-of-state travel, in which the traveler receives a flat per diem for lodging and/or meals, regardless of the actual amount expended, are *not allowable* in Texas. Grantees must adhere to the guidelines stated above in lieu of a travel allowance.

Travel Documentation

Travel costs must be properly documented to be reimbursable. The employee must document travel costs with a travel voucher or other comparable documentation. Auditable documentation must include the following at a minimum:

- Name of the individual claiming travel reimbursement
- Destination and purpose of the trip, including how it was necessary to accomplish the objectives of the grant project
- Dates of travel
- Actual mileage (not to exceed reimbursement at the maximum allowable rate)
- Actual amount expended on lodging per day, *with a receipt attached* (may not exceed the maximum allowable)
- Actual amount expended on meals per day (may not exceed the maximum allowable; tips and gratuities are not reimbursable)
- Actual amount expended on public transportation, such as taxis and shuttles
- Actual amount expended on a rental car, *with a receipt attached* and justification for why a rental car was necessary and how it was more cost effective than alternate transportation; receipts for any gasoline purchased for the rental car must be attached (mileage is not reimbursed for a rental car—only the cost of gasoline is reimbursed)
- Actual amount expended on incidentals, such as hotel taxes, copying of materials, and other costs associated with the travel
- Total amount reimbursed to the employee

Travel costs that are not supported by proper documentation as described above are not allowable to be charged to TEA grants and are subject to disallowance by state and federal auditors and monitors.

If you have any questions about these travel reimbursement rates that apply to all TEA grants, please contact the Office of the Chief Grants Administrator at GAFPC@tea.state.tx.us.