

## EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT REGULATION – TRAVEL AND MEALS

State law authorizes reimbursement of “actual and necessary expenses” incurred by Tech Valley High School (TVHS) employees in the performance of their duties. In addition, the TVHS staff must conform to existing Internal Revenue Service rules. Specifically, reimbursement plans that do not comply with the IRS rules are called non-accountable plans. All reimbursements under a non-accountable plan are reported as salary or wage income to the employee. If the plan meets the IRS rules, it is classified as an accountable plan and reimbursements are not reported as salary or wage income. In order to ensure that the TVHS plan is an accountable plan and employees are adequately reimbursed for “actual and necessary” expenses, the following procedures/guidelines must be followed:

Whenever possible, vehicles owned by the Capital Region BOCES should be used for business trips if it more economical than other means of travel.

Employees who use their own vehicles for assigned travel between facilities will be reimbursed at the rate allowed by the IRS for the current tax year. The calculation for this reimbursement will be based on the actual miles traveled from one site to the next. It must not include the mileage from home to the first site or from the last site to home except in the case in which the employee is assigned to a site in the evening. In this instance, the person may claim the mileage from the last day time site to home and to the evening site.

All travel expense reimbursement claims must be submitted using the Travel Expense Voucher Form.

All expenses for meals, lodging, and incidental expenses must be supported by adequate proof of expenditures, i.e., **original itemized receipts** with the preprinted name of the vendor and the date service was provided.

### Travel Reimbursement Rules

- Employees are required to substantiate all meal expenses with **original itemized receipts**. Employees may be reimbursed for actual expenditures, up to the maximum amounts, as follows:

<u>Item</u>	<u>NY City Area *</u>	<u>Within NY State (excluding NYC)</u>	<u>Out-of-State</u>
Breakfast	\$10.79	\$9.27	\$10.79
Lunch **	14.99	10.85	14.99
Dinner	30.39	26.51	30.39
Additional allowance for overnight incidentals (i.e., laundry)	1.57	1.57	1.57

\* The term "New York City Area" includes New York City, Nassau, Rockland, Suffolk and Westchester Counties.

\*\* Lunch reimbursement unless associated with overnight travel or a conference is taxable. Submission to the Business Office will generate reimbursement through the payroll process. Lunch will be identified as compensation and reported on the employee's IRS Form W-2, and is subject to payroll taxes.

- Sales tax imposed on food by a restaurant may be considered an expense incidental to the meal and an actual and necessary expenditure incurred in connection with travel on official business.
- Tax exemption certificates must be utilized for all lodging within New York State. Reimbursement claims for room taxes within New York State will not be approved.
- When a room is shared by a spouse, the single occupancy rate will be reimbursed if noted by the hotel on the receipt; otherwise, one-half (2) of the room rate will be paid.
- Meals, travel expenses and all other expenses incurred by an employee's spouse is a personal expense of the employee.
- Receipts for other expenses, i.e., parking fees, tolls, etc., must also be submitted. All lodging expenses identified as miscellaneous must be explained in detail. The business purpose of phone calls, even those itemized on hotel/motel bills, must be explained in sufficient detail (i.e., *called office or called XYZ School District*).
- Whenever possible, vehicles owned by the Capital Region BOCES should be used for business trips if it is more economical than other means of travel.
- Travel status is defined as when an employee is on assignment at a work location more than 35 miles from both home and official work station, for more than three hours. This determines that they are eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses, such as meals and lodging.
- When travel is to a work location that is either a) within 35 miles of the employee's residence or official work station, or b) for less than three hours, the employee will not be considered to be on travel status and will not be eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses such, as meals and lodging.
- An employee may be reimbursed for meal expenses when he or she is required to attend an approved workshop or conference which extends through and beyond the recognized meal time, or is on travel status.
- While on travel status, the following guidelines for reimbursement of meals will be used:
  - Breakfast:* reimbursement will be allowed if the travel began more than an hour prior to the normal start of the employee's workday.
  - Lunch:* reimbursement will be allowed if the travel began prior to noon and continued beyond 2:00 p.m. (\*\* see above)
  - Dinner:* reimbursement will be allowed if the travel continued more than an hour beyond the normal end of the employee's workday.
- Expenditures for the purchase of alcoholic beverages are not considered a proper or necessary travel or meeting expense and must not be claimed for reimbursement.
- Gratuities may be considered an actual and necessary expense and may be reimbursed provided they are reasonable and either as charged by the restaurant on their receipt or actual and within 15 percent of the bill, the total of which may be rounded up to the next whole dollar for meals over

\$5, or up to the next fifty cents for meals at or below \$5. Meal and gratuity together must be within maximum allowable amounts.

- Taxicab charges will be reimbursed upon submission of a receipt. Tipping, which includes baggage handling, of 15% and \$1 per bag will be allowed. Reimbursement for taxi charges and limousine services to and from an airport will be approved upon submission of an appropriate receipt.
- Travel expense reimbursement requests **must** be submitted on the Travel Expense Voucher form (revised July 1, 2003).
- Reimbursement for approved supplies and materials must be submitted on the Miscellaneous Expense Voucher form (July 1, 2003).
- Per the definitions of “travel trips” outlined in Board Policy 6830, travel expense for business trips are to be coded to object code 454. Travel expense for conference trips are to be coded to object code 456.
- Expenditures for the purchase of alcoholic beverages are not considered a proper or necessary travel or meeting expense and must not be claimed for reimbursement.
- An employee may be reimbursed for meal expenses when he/she is required to attend an approved workshop or conference which extends through and beyond the recognized meal times. The following guidelines are to be used.

Breakfast: reimbursement will be allowed only if the meal is an integral part of the meeting.

Lunch: reimbursement will be allowed if the meeting starts prior to noon and continues until 2:00 p.m.

Dinner: reimbursement will be allowed if the meeting starts prior to 5:00 p.m. and continues until 7:00 p.m.

**A copy of the meeting or conference agenda should be submitted to substantiate the meeting times.**

- “Local” is defined as the 24 component school districts and the Albany City School District) within the Capital region or within the immediate geographical area of employment assignment including those assigned to the Gick Road or Plattsburgh sites.

### Personal Expenses

The BOCES does not reimburse persons traveling on TVHS-related business for personal expenses including, but not limited to, pay television, hotel health club facilities, theater and show tickets, and telephone calls and transportation costs unrelated to TVHS business.

### **Questions and Answers Related to Travel Reimbursement**

What information has to be supplied on requests for travel expense reimbursement? The travel expense form must show the distance traveled, between what places, and the dates and items of each expenditure.

Are receipts necessary when submitting travel claims? Yes. Receipts should be obtained and are required for meals, lodging, parking, tolls, telephone, and airport shuttle service, etc.

What expenses are allowed under travel reimbursement? Only the actual and necessary expenses essential to the ordinary comforts of a traveler in the performance of official TVHS business (duties) will be reimbursed, in accordance with the established allowances.

What type of receipt is required for air travel? The passenger portion of the airline ticket or an invoice from a travel agency must be submitted with your travel claim.

What other types of receipts are required? Receipts are required for day parking and overnight parking, toll charges and meals. The name of the service provider must be imprinted on the receipt.

Is reimbursement allowed for privately owned airplane travel? No, travel via this means is not allowed and claims will not be honored.

Under normal duty, what is the amount paid for mileage accumulated when an employee uses his own car while on TVHS business? The mileage reimbursement will reflect the rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service for the current year. The request for this reimbursement must be submitted on the standard Travel Expense Form.

Can a TVHS officer be reimbursed for meals while attending an organization meeting? Yes, if the organization is made up of similar public officials and the meal is part of a regularly scheduled meeting of the organization and the meeting is held for school business purposes.

Are meals incurred by consultants eligible for meal reimbursement? Generally, no. a consultant's "fee" should include all expenses including travel, meal and lodging. However, when reimbursement is required, it will be in accordance with employee reimbursement practices.

What expenditures are not allowable for reimbursement under TVHS guidelines? Primarily they are sales tax (TVHS is tax exempt), and personal expenses described above such as charges for personal telephone calls. Business calls will be reimbursed when an explanation is provided with the reimbursement claim.

Are there special allowances made for TVHS employees who are required to travel on TVHS business and expend substantial amounts of money prior to being able to submit a normal Travel Expense claim? Yes. A Travel Expense Advance application form is available for this purpose. This form must be completed and submitted to the District Superintendent for approval ten days prior to the conference or day of travel. The procedure is designed especially for staff members traveling out of town for conferences which will last several days. The amount of the actual Travel Expense Advance will be 75% of the total anticipated expenses, and this figure must exceed \$150.00.

Does TVHS pay for guest or non-TVHS employee meals? No. Employees are not authorized to seek personal reimbursement to pay for guest or non-TVHS employee meals.

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