

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 TEA for individuals on travel status.

Mileage

Travelers must calculate mileage by one of the following two methods:

- Odometer reading (point-to-point method)
- Electronic mapping source (such as that on [Google Maps](#) or any other online mapping service). Best practice to successfully pass a travel audit when using this method is for the traveler to print out the driving directions provided by the site and attach them to the travel voucher or maintain other appropriate documentation.

Travelers must 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 reimbursement rate published by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (as specified in the General Appropriations Act), then the difference must be paid from state or local funds and 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.

Tips and Incidental Expenses

Tips and gratuities are not eligible for reimbursement from grant funds.

Incidental expenses that are incurred during travel may be eligible for reimbursement. The incidental expense must be job-related, and local policy must specify that incidental expenses are eligible for reimbursement from grant funds while employees are on grant-related travel.

In-State Travel

The US General Services Administration (GSA) publishes the [per diem rates](#) that Texas uses for reimbursement of meal and lodging expenditures. Because the reimbursement rates can change, it is recommended that travelers print the page when making reservations and submit the printout with the travel reimbursement voucher as a supporting document.

Access meal and lodging reimbursement information and rates through the [Texas State Comptroller's website](#).

Non-Overnight Meals

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 the maximum rate listed on the Texas State Comptroller's website. In the absence of a local policy, no reimbursement shall be made from the grant for this purpose.

Reimbursement for non-overnight meal expenses is considered income and must be included on the employee's W-2 form as part of the employee's taxable wages.

Travel must begin at one duty point and end at another. Regardless of when the travel occurs, mileage to and from the employee's home or location other than a duty point is not allowable to be charged to the grant.

"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.*

Applying Meal Funds to Lodging Reimbursement

For both in-state and out-of-state travel, the traveler may apply funds available for meal reimbursement (up to the rate specified on the GSA's [Per Diem Rates](#) page) toward lodging. For instance, if the traveler chooses 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 GSA's [Per Diem Rates](#) page.

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 and not from grant funds.

Hotel Taxes

School districts and charter schools 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 email GrantSupport@tea.texas.gov.