

CONFERENCE / TRAINING GUIDELINES

Overview

District employees may be authorized to attend and/or facilitate seminars, conferences, classes, and other activities to enhance their job knowledge. Certain expenses related to these activities may be paid by the District. Prior to attending such events, employees are required to complete a Request for Conference or Activity Attendance form to receive travel / attendance authorization, even if there is no expense to the district. The Request for Conference or Activity Attendance form should include information on the type of activity, dates, place, and an estimate of expenses, and it should be completed well in advance of the scheduled activity (at least 30-60 days is recommended). Once the activity has been approved by the department head and the College President, the request is then sent to the college CFA or other administrative personnel for fund encumbrance and a reference number. Funds for conferences and other training-related activities must be encumbered to 586100 for conferences and for one-day training events. When encumbering funds it is better to leave a cushion in case expenses are slightly higher than anticipated. Once the request is completed it is then sent to ESC AP for review and processing of the payment.

Types of Activities

The following types of pre-approved employee training activities are processed using the Conference guidelines on the Request for Conference or Activity Attendance form. Note that employees may qualify whether attending or facilitating training activities.

- Conferences
- Training classes
- Workshops, seminars, webinars
- Field trips
- Compliance training
- Trade certification courses (plumbing, pesticides, etc.)

The following activities are not processed under the Conference guidelines:

- MOUS Training (must go through Human Resources)
- Classes for college credit (use Tuition Reimbursement rules)
- Courses or training to obtain a personal certification or designation (i.e.: CPA license, BAR license, nursing license)
- Student-related activities (use Student Travel guidelines)
- Self-Study programs (consisting of study materials and/or exam fees)
- Any type of training paid out-of-pocket that was not pre-authorized (must go through Tuition Reimbursement process or to Board for approval)

Processing Timeline

Conference and training requests must be initiated 30-60 days in advance. RUSH requests will be considered based on AP workload but are not guaranteed.

Processing Options

All conference/training activities are to be processed on the "Request for Conference or Activity Attendance" form. There are a number of payment options, and we recommend adhering to the following guidelines:

1. Conference Registration Fees and Course Fees: The desired procedure for payment of qualifying conference registration fees and course fees is to have ESC AP process an advance payment directly to the vendor. The word "PREPAID" should be written prominently on the Request for Conference form if an advanced payment is being requested. Any prepaid expenses should be properly documented with invoices, course descriptions, event flyers, vendor quotes, etc. Also, the vendor's name and remittance address should be obvious in the vendor invoice. Prepayments will only be made up to 30 days in advance of the activity or event.

Payment Option 2 is for an employee to pay out-of-pocket for registration fees or course fees, however, reimbursement will be contingent upon four things: (1) the activity must be approved in advance. If it is not, then Board approval will be required for reimbursement, (2) the activity must qualify for reimbursement under the Conference and Activity Attendance rules. If it does not qualify (perhaps because it falls under the Tuition Reimbursement rules) then reimbursement will not be made, (3) the event must be concluded and valid confirmation is provided that the employee did in fact attend the activity, and (4) proof of payment for all out-of-pocket expenses (proof may include original invoices and receipts indicating payment with the employee's credit card, a front and back copy of the employee's cashed check, copy of the employee's bank statement or credit card statement showing the payment being made).

Because of the complexity of the Conference/Training Activity rules, the use of the Cal Card to pay for registration fees and course fees is discouraged due to the potential misuse of the card.

2. Airfare: It is recommended that employees arrange their own flights. There are a couple of options. Option 1: You can go through one of the District's approved travel agencies (see below). By giving them the assigned Travel Number they can book the flight and they will in turn bill the District. Option 2: Use a Cal Card to pay for the flight. Option 3: Pay "out-of-pocket" and request a reimbursement on the Travel Expense Claim form after the trip is over. Again, reimbursement will be contingent upon the activity having been approved in advance and confirmation that the employee attended the activity. Note that upgraded airline seating is not allowed.

3. Lodging: It is recommended that employees arrange their own lodging. As with flight, there are some options. Option 1: Use a Cal Card to pay for the lodging. Option 2: Request a Travel Advance for the anticipated cost of the lodging. When requesting an Advance consider other anticipated expenses such as shuttle services, car rental, meals, and other incidental expenses. A ten day lead time is required to process an Advance check to the employee. Note that Advances are never issued more than one week in advance of the event or activity. Therefore, if one feels it necessary to reserve room accommodations more than a week in advance, you may want to hold the reservation with a Cal Card or a personal credit card and then pay with your Advance upon check in. Option 3: You can pay "out-of-pocket" and request a reimbursement on the Travel Expense Claim form after the trip is over. Again, reimbursement will be contingent upon the activity having been approved in advance and confirmation that the employee attended the activity. Note that upgraded room accommodations are not allowed. In addition, lodging expenses are disallowed for any activities held in L.A. County unless there is a compelling reason that would deem it a necessary expense. Furthermore, lodging expenses incurred after a scheduled event (such as an extra day hotel stay incurred after the event is over) are not allowed with District funds.

4. Food Expenses: The district may allow for meals at all-day and overnight activities and events. The meal reimbursement is capped at \$75.00 per day, however, the District will only reimburse up to \$25.00 per day without itemized receipts. In addition, employees may not request reimbursement for any out-of-pocket meal periods that are included in the cost of the event registration. Furthermore, meal expenses for single-day events held within L.A. County are not reimbursable, nor are food expenses incurred after a scheduled event has ended. Meal tips and gratuities are limited to 15% of the total cost of the meal.

There are several payment options for meals: Option 1: Use the Cal Card to pay for meals of district employees while traveling. Option 2: Request an Advance check at least ten days prior to the event. Option 3: Pay "out-of-pocket" for food expenses and request reimbursement on the Travel Expense Claim form upon return from the event or activity. Note that the Revolving Fund process is NOT a reimbursement option. Food and beverage expenses are not allowed on the Revolving Fund.

5. Mileage Expenses: The use of a private vehicle is allowed for attending conferences and training activities. Mileage driven for any event or activity processed on a Request for Conference or Activity Attendance form must be claimed on an accompanying Travel Expense Claim form, not on the standard Mileage Claim form. Any trip involving more than 200 miles round trip must also be claimed on the Travel Expense Claim, not the standard Mileage Claim form. An employee's normal commute miles should be deducted from training/travel mileage. Proper backup documentation for vehicle expenses includes trip logs, Google/Yahoo Maps mileage estimates, parking stubs, etc. Note that the expenses claimed for the use of a personal vehicle cannot exceed the cost of the most economical carrier such as an airline flight or rail transportation. If multiple employees carpool to an event it is feasible that the mileage expense claim, although greater than the cost of a round-trip flight, would be the most economical transportation. Only the owner of the carpool vehicle may claim the mileage.

Here are some further considerations when planning a conference or training activity:

Advance Checks can be made payable to an employee for anticipated travel expenses. This is most often done for lodging, shuttle services, car rental, meals, and other incidental expenses such as taxi service, portage, and service tips. Incidental expenses are limited to \$20.00 per day on travel days, and \$5.00 per day on non-travel days.

A 10 day lead time is required for processing advances. A travel advance must be requested on the Conference Travel Advance Request form. Travel advances may be issued to employees as far as one week in advance of the event but no sooner than that. If it is necessary to reserve lodging more than one week in advance of the event then it is recommended that the employee reserve/hold the room night(s) with a Cal Card or personal credit card. Advance checks must be a minimum of \$100 and they may only be issued for up to 90% of the total estimated expenses. Anticipated expenses must be justifiable and backup documentation may be requested.

Within 10 days upon return from the training event the employee must file a Travel Expense Claim listing the actual expenses incurred. If the advance check is larger than the valid expenses incurred then the employee must write a check back to the District made payable to: LACCD for the amount of the difference. If the expenses incurred are greater than the encumbered amount then the employee may file an amendment to the travel request. The amendment must be substantiated by original itemized receipts and must be approved by the VP of Admin or the President of the college. To avoid the extra work involved with travel amendments it is recommended that employees build in a cushion when estimating incidental expenses. Note: Un-cleared travel advances will result in a hold on the processing of future advances for both conferences, student-travel activities, as well as reimbursements.

Travel Agencies: Colleges may arrange airfare directly through a District-approved travel agency. District AP will then process a payment to the travel agency. Note that the District-approved travel agencies will not book the flight without a Travel Number provided by the College. Here are the travel agencies currently used by the District:

TK Travel (v# 3004515) 818-701-0100

Travel Exchange (v# 3002239) Bill: 323-848-8022

If you wish to suggest a specific travel agency for District approval please inform AP Manager, Ron Paquette.

Payments Made Out-of-Pocket: An employee may pay out-of-pocket for training or conference-related expenses and then request for reimbursement, but only on the condition that attendance authorization was received prior to the activity or event. Reimbursement amounts cannot exceed the pre-approved amount unless an amendment is filed and approved. Note that if an employee pays conference fees or course fees out-of-pocket for an upcoming conference or training event, he or she will NOT be eligible for reimbursement until after the event is over and it is confirmed that the employee attended the activity. Reimbursement claims must be filed on the Conference Travel Expense Claim form. Any reimbursement received by an employee from sources other than the District shall be deducted.

Students and Student Workers who attend conferences: Any conferences or training activities involving students must be processed using the Student Travel Guidelines, not the Conference guidelines, except in the case of student-workers who have an employee ID number and are processed on the Request for Conference or Activity Attendance form.

Charter Vans and Buses: Payments for charter vans and buses must be made directly to the vendor on an STA if under \$5,000 (or contract if \$5,000 or more).

Tour Companies: If a tour company is attained to facilitate travel arrangements for a group of individuals and the travel expenses are being paid to the tour company (as opposed to a direct payment to the airline, venue, or charter van service) then a contract must be created with that tour company and the payment will be made according to the district's contract guidelines.

One Conference Request form per person: Employees may only process their own expenses on a Request for Conference or Activity Attendance form or Conference Travel Expense Claim. They may not pay for someone else's expenses and then request reimbursement on their personal claim. Each person must pay their own expenses and file their own claim.

Payments Requested Far in Advance or in Next Fiscal Year: District prepayments for registration fees and course fees are typically only made up to 30 days in advance of the activity or event. It is possible to process a prepayment in the current year for an event taking place in the next fiscal year by using the pre-pay account (ask ESC AP for details). Once the new year's budget funds become available an encumbrance is made to cover the prepaid expenses.

Disallowed Expenses

Certain expenses are not allowed such as rental car insurance, upgraded airline seating, deluxe lodging accommodations, alcohol, and items of a personal nature. Expenses of spouses, friends, and relatives traveling with the employee are also disallowed. Note: the District will only reimburse the lesser of the mileage rate or the common carrier rate (air or rail).

Cal Card Rules for Conferences / Training Activities

The Cal Card may be used to make travel purchases and arrangements subject to the normal limitations of the card (typically \$2,500 per single transaction and \$10,000 per month). The card holders may arrange travel for themselves and their immediate staff only. Qualifying purchases include airfare, lodging, and food expenses under certain situations. The payment of conference fees and course fees on the Cal Card is discouraged, because some types of training activities may be required to go through the Tuition Reimbursement process and others may be completely disallowed. And sometimes card holders confuse conference attendance fees with organizational membership fees, which are handled differently. It is better to have ESC AP review the request and make qualifying pre-payments directly to the vendor.

