



# **TRAVEL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

Office of Financial Services

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# Travel Guidelines and Procedures

These guidelines are intended to provide readers with a general overview of the procedures associated with traveling while on official district business.

## General Information

Staff members authorized to travel on behalf of the district shall be reimbursed for allowable travel-related expenses. The processes established herein have been developed on the premise that staff members will use good judgment and prudence in the expenditure of District funds when traveling. Staff are expected to select the most economical travel arrangements. All staff members are responsible for compliance with the provisions of the district's travel policies. Requests for exceptions to these regulations must be prior approved by the Chief of Schools or designee.

Staff may request for a travel advance which includes baggage, food and lodging. Mileage reimbursements are processed upon return from travel and completion of the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report. Staff member travel expenses must be submitted separately for reimbursement. The district does not reimburse staff for expenses paid on behalf of another staff member during travel.

## Travel Regulations for In-District and Out-of-District Travel

Travel Location	Description
<b>In-District</b>	All travel within the Spring ISD campuses and facilities.
<b>Local</b>	All travel within the greater Houston metropolitan area.
<b>Out of District</b>	All state travel outside the greater Houston metropolitan area.
<b>Out of State</b>	All out-of-state travel is not considered tax exempt outside of the state of Texas, so a Hotel Tax Exemption Certificate is not needed. Charges coded to object code 6411, 6412, or 6419 must include the Sub-Object code "TO" to identify it as out-of-state travel.

## Air Travel

Staff traveling over 150 miles one way shall use air travel whenever possible to reduce travel time. All trips within 150 miles of the staff members assigned facility/campus, shall be driven and reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate. Only members of the Senior Leadership Team can approve a different mode of travel.

Advance planning is crucial when requisitioning air travel. An approved Request for SISD Travel Reservations Form is required to process air travel. The electronic form (Laserfiche) is located on the district's website directory under Travel, and is forwarded to the district's Travel Coordinator in the Procurement Department. Upon receipt, the District Travel Coordinator will send notification via Laserfiche with the flight itinerary to bookkeeper/ secretary. Use of personal travel agents and/or booking air travel for personal points are not allowed.

All staff members must have a valid photo identification when traveling. The name on the flight ticket **must** match the name on the driver's license or identification card. Flight tickets are electronic and non-transferable. Notify the Travel Coordinator prior to the date of travel if a trip is to be cancelled. An

increase in fare, due to failure to cancel or change travel plans without supervisor approval, will result in the staff member absorbing any additional fees charged to the district.

Each month, airline travel expenses will be charged to the appropriate organization budgets. Please make sure the appropriate travel account (6411 or 6412) to be charged has sufficient funds. Flight tickets are charged to the district credit card; hence, budget accounts will be charged within one to four weeks from the date of purchase. Seating requiring additional fees must be approved by the budget manager.

## Luggage

Luggage will be reimbursed for the first checked bag each way at the exact cost with receipt. Charges for overweight bags will not be reimbursed.

## Lodging

Lodging within the greater Houston metropolitan area is not allowed. An approved Request for SISD Travel Reservations Form is required to process hotel reservations. The electronic form (Laserfiche) is located on the district's website directory under Travel, and is forwarded to the district's Travel Coordinator in the Procurement Department. Upon receipt, the District Travel Coordinator will send notification via Laserfiche with the reservation to the bookkeeper/ secretary. The staff member is responsible for paying the hotel bill at the time of check out.

Lodging within Texas requires a Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate to be given to the hotel to avoid paying Texas State occupancy tax. The certificate is located in the district's Travel website. The occupancy sales tax and sales tax in states other than Texas will be reimbursed. Some hotels may require proof of employment with an identification badge.

The district will not provide reimbursement for Texas sales tax. County and municipal (city) hotel tax is reimbursable. In order to receive reimbursement for the hotel stay, an itemized receipt showing payment must be submitted. This is the responsibility of the staff member.

To avoid cancellation fees, the staff member is responsible for notifying the District Travel Coordinator or hotel prior to the cancellation deadline. If the hotel is not notified by the required deadline, the staff member shall be required to pay any fees assessed by the hotel.

The district will not reimburse hotel charges for internet connection fees unless the staff member receives prior approval from the supervisor or budget manager. The district will not provide reimbursement for movies, conference shirts, entertainment, alcoholic beverages, room service fee, other personal charges, etc. Staff members attending the same event are expected to share rooms whenever appropriate. If sharing room with a staff member, lodging advancement is allowable to one staff member per room. In cases in which the spouse (who is not a District staff member on official school business) and/or children accompany the school staff member, no expenses for the family member(s) shall be reimbursed.

Only single standard rates are to be included in the request for reimbursement. For example, if double room occupancy costs \$75 and single \$60, the staff member will be reimbursed at the \$60 rate if the room is shared with a spouse who is not a District staff member on official school business or any non-staff members.

## Meals

Travel reimbursement for meal expenses when overnight lodging is not required is considered taxable income according to the IRS; therefore, according to SISD guidelines, meals will not be reimbursed unless overnight lodging is required. Meal expenses incurred within the district or within the greater Houston metropolitan area are not reimbursable (unless traveling with students); however, if meals are included in the registration fee, the full registration fee will still be paid.

The district will reimburse the actual cost of meals up to a maximum of \$40 per day of travel. Itemized meal receipts are required for meal reimbursement.

## Membership Fees

Membership fees will be reimbursed if required to attend an event.

## Personal Vehicle

Staff members will be reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate. In no case should this expense exceed the cost of air coach travel. If more than one person is attending the same event, carpooling should be considered, whenever possible. This includes approved trips that exceed 150 miles. Travelers are required to select the shortest and most economical route. Google Maps or Map Quest must be attached as support for the mileage reimbursement.

Staff members receiving a car allowance will be reimbursed for out-of-district travel expenses for the use of their personal vehicle beyond the first 100 miles. Staff members not receiving a car allowance will be reimbursed for travel expenses for the use of personal vehicles incurred for necessary school-related business. Mileage to and from a staff member's home will not be reimbursed (commute mileage).

## Car Rental

Automobile rental of a midsize or a lower rate vehicle is available through travel services when approved in advance by the budget manager or Senior Leadership Team. Large SUV's or vans may be requested for groups exceeding four persons. District insurance will be provided by the Procurement Department. DO NOT SIGN FOR ADDITIONAL INSURANCE.

The district provides insurance coverage for rentals. In an event that a staff member is in an accident, the staff member should immediately contact his or her supervisor.

Vehicle rental may not be changed from approved reservation. It is the responsibility of the staff member to examine the invoice for accuracy before leaving the rental office. The district will not reimburse for fuel fee, if vehicle is returned without fuel and/or additional amenities. Reimbursement for rental car expenses require expenses to be submitted with an itemized receipt on the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report Form.

## Parking and Tolls

Self-parking and Tolls are reimbursed at the exact cost with receipt. Please ensure to provide the Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification for parking taxes in the state of Texas.

## Transportation

Lyft, Shuttle, Taxi, or Uber expenses are reimbursed at the exact cost with itemized receipt. Gratuity cannot exceed twenty percent (20%) of total transportation receipt.

## Travel Advance

A staff member may request a travel advance, when necessary, for out-of-district travel expenses; e.g., hotel, meals, parking, etc. A Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report Form shall be sent to the Finance Department after all required signatures are obtained. Upon return, this advance should be reported on the original Professional Trip Authorization and Final Expense Report Form and deducted from the amount of total expenses. If the cash advance exceeds the amount of reimbursable expenses, the staff member shall submit cash, check, or money order made payable to the district along with the Professional Trip Authorization and Final Expense Report Form with approved signatures to the Finance Department. Future advance funds will not be processed until all receipts, documentation, and/or refunds from prior trips have been received and finalized by AP office.

## Unused Funds

Any amount advanced to a staff member which is not used, or which are deemed not allowable under these regulations, shall be reimbursed to the district within 10 days of the return date of travel. If such amount is not reimbursed within the 10-day period, the staff member expressly authorizes the district to recover such amount using a payroll deduction on the next available pay period.

## Student Travel

Procedures for travel arrangements for student travel are the same as for district staff members. Complete the Student Travel Authorization and Final Expense Report Form. The following information is required to make travel arrangements:

- Air Travel:
  - Student name (as it appears on student ID, birthdate, or ID/passport)
  - Chaperone/sponsor name and birthdate
- Budget code to be used for expenses
- An approved Request for SISD Travel Reservations Form (if trip requires air travel)
- For student travel, the district will not reimburse for overnight lodging within the Houston Metropolitan area unless prior approval is received from a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The reimbursement rate for student meals is up to \$25 a day. Staff members requesting an advance for student meals must submit the [Student Travel Cash Disbursement](#) Form with the student's signature stating the amount given to each student. This should be submitted with the final expense report.

# Travel Procedures

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## Step 1 – Conference Approval

Ensure that attendance at the conference has been approved by the appropriate administrator.

## Step 2 – Conference Requisition – Submit to Procurement Department

Upon approval from administrators authorized to approve the conference, a purchase requisition will need to be generated for the conference registration fees.

In the Purchase Requisition description field, please include the following:

- Conference name, location, travel dates
- Name of attendee(s)

## Step 3 – Conference Payment

Once the requisition has gone through the approval workflow and converted into a purchase order, payment will need to be processed. In order to process payment for the conference registration, the originator of the requisition will need to do the following:

- Receive the purchase order in eFinancePlus for approval of payment.
- Submit the backup documentation (e.g., registration forms) to the Accounts Payable department referencing the purchase order number.

After the payment request has been processed by the Accounts Payable department the check will be returned to the department/school so that the appropriate documentation can be included with the check. The campus/department will mail check to the conference vendor.

## Step 4 – Request for Travel Reservations (if required)

The requestor (staff member or bookkeeper/secretary) shall submit a [Request for SISD Travel Reservations Request Form](#) to the District's Travel Coordinator via Laserfiche. Please see instructions on [How to Submit a Travel Reservation Request Form](#). Allow 48 hours for processing request.

- Air Travel
- Rental Car
- Hotel – Lodging
- Group Travel – Groups with over ten travelers may make air, hotel, and ground transportation arrangements through the district's contracted vendors for [Group Travel Services](#) in category field.
- Flights will be researched and flight confirmation is sent via Laserfiche to the requester (bookkeeper/secretary).
- Flights are non-transferable. If flight changes, fee may be incurred. Flight credits may be given to only to authorized traveler within the year.
- Flight expenses will be charged to the budget code listed on the Request for SISD Travel Reservations.
- Student Travel will require support of permission slips for each student and sponsor information.
- Tickets cannot be transferred to another person.

- Any changes/cancellations MUST be submitted on the [Change/Cancellation Form](#). This form is signed by the traveler, supervisor, and a Senior Leadership Team. If approval is not granted the traveler is personally liable for all travel related charges.

### *Rental Car*

- A confirmation email will be sent to the staff member. Staff member will need to have a driver's license in "good standing." Additional charges may be incurred for drivers under the age of 25. A reservation only holds the rental car, but the staff member is responsible for payment. A major credit card is required to make payment. When a credit card or debit card is provided to rental car company, a deposit including an additional 20 percent more than the cost of the rental will be taken at the time of rental and the funds will not be available for use until after the vehicle has been returned.
- The district carries auto insurance. DO NOT SIGN FOR ADDITIONAL INSURANCE.
- To avoid higher gas rates charged by the rental companies, the staff member shall fill the gas tank before returning the rental car. The district will not reimburse for extra gas charges.

### *Hotel Lodging*

- The hotel reservation confirmation is sent to the requestor (bookkeeper/secretary) via Laserfiche. The requestor will forward to staff member via email.
- The district credit card will be used to **guarantee the room only**. Staff members are responsible for paying the hotel bill. Staff members may request for a travel advancement, complete [Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report Form](#).
- Hotels require a personal credit card upon check in for incidentals.
- Obtain and submit the Texas Hotel Tax Exemption form.
- Obtain an itemized statement of hotel charges at time of check out for reimbursement.

## **Step 5 – Request for Travel Funds (If no advance is requested skip to Step 9)**

A Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report form will need to be completed by the staff member requesting the travel advance funds. The top portion of the form will need to be completed if a travel advance is requested.

The following information is required to have a complete Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report form:

- Staff member information and Purchase order number, Name of conference with date range and Budget Unit and Account number
- Advance amount requested (lodging, meals, baggage fee, etc.)
- Staff Member, Supervisor, Budget Manager Signatures are required
- Copy of conference information with date and location

\*For Federal Fund Audit and Compliance; follow Hotel Per Diem Rates from GSA website and attach copy



## Step 6 – Requisition Request for Travel Advance

In order for a staff member to receive a travel advance, a purchase requisition will need to be generated. The purchase requisition's description will need to include the following:

- Conference name, Location, date range
- Additional line item for .01 cents (*to be used for Final Expense reconciliation*)

## Step 7 – Travel Advance Purchase Order

Once the requisition has been processed and approved as a purchase order you will need to receive the purchase order in eFinancePlus.

## Step 8 – Travel Advance Payment

In order for the staff member to receive the funds from their travel advance the following items will need to be submitted at least **10 days prior** to the departure date to the Accounts Payable Coordinator in the Finance department:

- Completed Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report, Purchase Order number, and a copy of the conference brochure

Reminders:

- Notify Accounts Payable of any travel changes (staff member, advance amount, etc.).
- Submit Purchase Order Change Notice to Procurement Department for travel changes.
- The funds will be electronically deposited into the staff member's bank account. An email will be sent notifying the staff member.
- The Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report is returned to the campus/department with voucher or check number.

## Step 9 – Final Expense Report – Reimbursement

The Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report form must be completed and is due to Accounts Payable **within 10 days of the return date**.

The Final Expense Report is located on the bottom portion of the form.

- Under the Final Expense Report/Allowable Expense column, the amounts that need to be recorded are those from the advance requested.
- Under the Final Expense Report/Actual Expense column the amounts that need to be recorded are those actually spent.
- Staff Member, Supervisor, and Budget Manager (if different from Supervisor) signatures are required.

The Final Expense report will need to include the backup documentation for the following items:

- Itemized hotel lodging receipt
  - For Federal Funds audit and compliance, follow Hotel Per Diem Rates from GSA website and attach copy.
- Itemized meal receipts for Supervisor review and approval (receipts are to be filed at the campus/department.)
  - For Federal Fund audit and compliance, the staff member completes the Meals Actual Cost Per Day Form and is reviewed, approved, and filed at campus/department.
- Itemized receipts for Baggage, rental car, or shuttle, taxi, Lyft, or Uber
- Mileage Reimbursement shall include Google Maps or MapQuest.
- Receipts for any other expense that is being claimed on the form

**IMPORTANT:** *If money is owed by the staff member to Spring ISD they must include a check/money order made payable to Spring ISD for the money owed. DO NOT SEND the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense form without a check as this would be an incomplete form and will be sent back to the campus/department.*

Submit the original signature of the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense form along with the supporting documentation to the Accounts Payable Office in the Finance Department.

## **Step 10 – Reimbursement of Funds**

Once the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense form has been submitted to the Finance Department the travel reimbursement or closing of the purchase order will be reviewed and processed by the Accounts Payable Office.

- If money is due to the staff member, they will receive the funds electronically.
- If money is due to Spring ISD by the staff member, cash, check, or money order should be submitted with the Professional Trip Authorization and Final Expense form.

**If the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense form is not turned in within 10 days of the return date, the staff member's vendor account will be placed on "HOLD" and no future advances or reimbursements will be issued until the outstanding final expense report is received.**

# Travel Frequently Asked Questions

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## Reservations

### **I need to request a car rental reservation what do I need to do?**

*All car rental reservations require the staff member to complete the travel reservations form (Laserfiche) posted on the SISD Insider website, [sites.springisd.org/insider/Forms-documents](https://sites.springisd.org/insider/Forms-documents) or click [here](#)*

### **Will the car rental be paid by the district?**

*No, the reservation is only booked by the district. The staff member is responsible for providing the car rental company with a major credit card to pay for the car rental.*

### **Can I include the amount of the car rental on a travel advance?**

*Yes*

### **Who will make the flight reservations?**

*All flight reservations require the staff member to complete the travel reservations form (Laserfiche) posted on the SISD Insider website, [sites.springisd.org/insider/Forms-documents](https://sites.springisd.org/insider/Forms-documents) or click [here](#)*

### **Will the flight reservation be paid by the district?**

*Yes, the Travel Coordinator will process payment for the air travel.*

### **Does a staff member need to reserve the hotel room or will the district reserve it?**

*The hotel can be reserved by the Travel Coordinator after the staff member completes the travel reservations form posted on the SISD Insider website, [sites.springisd.org/insider/Forms-documents](https://sites.springisd.org/insider/Forms-documents) or click [here](#). The reservation only holds the room.*

### **Who will pay for the hotel room?**

*The amount of the hotel can be included on the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report or the campus/department will need to arrange payment via a purchase order directly to the hotel.*

## Travel Advances

### **What form do I need to complete in order to receive a travel advance?**

*Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report*

### **What approval signatures are required?**

*Staff Member, Supervisor/Principal, and Budget Manager (if different from principal/supervisor).*

### **What do I need to attach to the Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report?**

*A copy of the conference agenda/brochure is required.*

### **Do I need to process a purchase order for a travel advance?**

*Yes, a purchase order is required and you must receive the purchase order in eFinancePlus.*

### **When do I need to submit the Trip Authorization and Expense Report?**

*Due to the approval process, it is recommended that a request for a travel advance should be submitted a month prior to the trip or earlier if possible.*

**When will I receive my travel advance check?**

*A travel advance is issued no earlier than 10 days prior to the departure date. The funds are electronically deposited into the staff member's bank account.*

## **Final Expense Report**

**I did not receive an advance for a required trip. Will I be reimbursed?**

*If this was an approved trip, then you will be required to complete the Final Expense Report (bottom portion of Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report) in order to be reimbursed.*

**What receipts do I need to attach to the Final Expense Report?**

*Hotel lodging (itemized receipt), car rental, shuttle, taxi, parking, and baggage receipts are required. Meal receipts are required to be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the budget manager. The meal receipts will need to be filed at the campus/department, not sent to Accounts Payable. Copy of Google Maps or Map Quest is required for mileage reimbursement.*

**Will the Final Expense Report need to be approved and signed?**

*Yes, all required signatures are needed –Staff Member, Supervisor, Budget Manger (if different from supervisor).*

**What happens if a staff member does not submit their Final Expense Report?**

*The staff member's vendor number will be put on "hold" and they will not be able to receive any future advances or reimbursements of any type until the Final Expense Report is turned in.*

**Can I get reimbursed for paying another staff member's travel expenses?**

*The district does not reimburse a staff member for another staff member's expenses incurred during travel on behalf of the district.*

# Travel Checklist

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## Conference Approval

- ☐ Request requisition/purchase order for conference registration
- ☐ Receive purchase order in eFinancePlus
- ☐ Send registration forms to Accounts Payable with purchase order number to issue payment

## Reservations

- ☐ Complete Electronic Request form for [SISD Travel Reservations](#) (air /hotel/rental car)
- ☐ Review and Confirm Reservations in Laserfiche

## Travel Advance

- ☐ Complete [Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report Form](#)
- ☐ Receive travel advance purchase order in eFinancePlus
- ☐ Forward Purchase Order and Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report form and include conference agenda, date, and location to Accounts Payable

## After Trip

- ☐ Complete Final Expense Report portion of Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report within 10 days of the return date
- ☐ Attach required itemized receipts (baggage, hotel, or transportation etc.)
- ☐ Meal receipts are submitted to budget manager for review
- ☐ Google Maps or Map Quest must be attached for mileage reimbursement
- ☐ Send the completed Professional Trip Authorization and Expense form to Accounts Payable with supporting documentation
- ☐ If money is due to the district; cash, check, or money order shall be payable to Spring ISD

## Student Travel

- ☐ Complete [SISD Student Reservation Form](#)
- ☐ Complete [Student Travel Authorization and Expense Report – Travel Advance](#)
- ☐ Sponsors requesting an advance for student meals shall turn in the [Student Travel Cash Disbursement Form](#) with student signature(s) when final expense report is submitted.