

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 for business and educational purposes on behalf of the District shall be reimbursed for all usual and customary travel-related expenses made on behalf and in connection with District business according to District rates and state law. 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. Travelers are expected to select the most economical and practical accommodations, arrangements and services in accordance with the needs of the trip. All travelers, as well as supervisors approving travel, are responsible for compliance with the provisions of the District's travel policies. Requests for exceptions to these regulations must be made in writing prior to taking a trip and signed by the Superintendent of Schools or designee.

The district has procedures in place to allow employees to request for a travel advance. It is the responsibility of the employee to request the travel advance. It is best practices and in the best interest of the district to not interfere or reconcile money transactions occurred between employees. The district does not reimburse an employee for another employee's expenses incurred during travel on behalf of the district. Thus, employees should refrain from paying travel expenses on behalf of another employee.

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

Travel Location	Description
In-District	All travel within the Spring ISD campus' and facilities.
Local	All travel within the greater Houston metropolitan area.
Out of District	All state travel outside the greater Houston metropolitan area.
Out of State	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

All staff traveling over 150 miles one way shall use air travel whenever possible to reduce travel time. All trips within 150 miles of the GMA Leadership Center shall be driven and reimbursed at the approved mileage rate. Only the Superintendent, Chief, or Assistant Superintendent 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 requests. The form is located in the district's website under Travel and is forwarded to the district's Travel Coordinator in the Procurement Department. Upon receipt, the District Travel Coordinator will send the flight itinerary to the staff member and bookkeeper or secretary. Staff members should not call their own agent or book flights over the internet on their own.

All staff members must have a valid photo identification when traveling. The name on the plane ticket **must** match the name on the driver's license or valid 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 a fare, due to a staff member's failure to cancel or change travel plans without supervisor approval, could 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 by the Procurement Department. Please make sure the appropriate travel account (6411 or 6412) to be charged has sufficient funds at the time tickets are requested. Tickets are charged to a District credit card; so depending on the billing cycle, budget accounts will be charged within one to five weeks from the date of purchase. Seating requiring additional fees must be approved by 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. The District will not reimburse for overnight lodging within this area unless prior approval is received from the Superintendent, Chief, or Assistant Superintendent. An approved Request for SISD Travel Reservations Form is required to process hotel reservations. The staff member is responsible for paying the hotel bill.

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 and 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 bill 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 may 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 employee on official school business) and/or children accompany the school employee, no expenses for the family member(s) shall be reimbursed.

Only single standard rates are to be included in the request for reimbursement and that amount should be validated on the receipt at the time of checkout. 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 employee on official school business or any non-employees.

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 only if these are required in order to attend an event.

Personal Vehicle

Staff members will be reimbursed at the approved IRS mileage rate for business use of their personal vehicle. In no case should this expense exceed the cost of air coach travel. If more than one person is attending the same meeting, they should carpool in one vehicle whenever possible. This includes approved trips that exceed 150 miles. Travelers are required to select the shortest and most economical route. For In-district travel, please refer to the District mileage chart. Travelers should select the shortest and most economical route from electronic mapping source (Google Maps, MapQuest, etc.). The electronic mapping source shall 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 lower rate is available through travel services when approved in advance by the Superintendent, Chief, or Assistant Superintendent. 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 is properly covered to provide insurance for employees who are driving while conducting business or in the course of conducting business on behalf of the District. In an event that an employee is in an accident, the employee should immediately contact his or her supervisor.

To avoid higher gas rates charged by the rental companies, the staff member shall fill the gas tank before returning the rental car. Vehicle type may not be changed from original reservation without prior approval from supervisor or budget manager. Also, be sure to examine the invoice for accuracy before leaving the rental office. Reimbursement for rental car expenses requires 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 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, mileage, 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, submit a check 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 an employee 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 employee 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 employees. Complete the Student Travel Authorization and Final Expense Report Form. The following information is required to make travel arrangements:

- Student name(s) (as it appears on student ID, driver's license, or passport)
- Chaperone/sponsor name(s)
- Budget code to be used for expenses
- An approved Request for SISD Travel Reservations Form (if trip requires air travel)

The reimbursement rate for student meals is up to \$25 a day—\$5.00 for breakfast, \$8.00 for lunch, and \$12.00 for dinner. Employees 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

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.

Requisition order description will need to include the following:

- Conference name, location, date range
- 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 then mail the check to the conference vendor.

Step 4 – Request for Travel Reservations (if required)

The bookkeeper/secretary shall submit a Request for SISD Travel Reservation form to the District's Travel Coordinator and include the following:

- Air Travel
- Rental Car
- Hotel Lodging

Air Travel

- Flights will be researched and flight choice selections will be emailed back to the person requesting the reservation and the traveler. Upon receipt of flight selection and approval, the reservation will be booked and confirmed. An email confirmation will be sent to the person requesting the reservation and the traveler.
- Flights are non-transferable and non-refundable and require a \$200 rebooking fee to change a flight. The ticket will be valid for one year from the date of purchase with a \$200 rebooking fee plus the difference in the price of the ticket.
- Flight expenses will be charged to the budget code listed on the Request for SISD Travel Reservations.

Note: Tickets cannot be transferred to another person. Any changes/cancellations MUST be submitted on the Change/Cancellation form. This form is located in the district's Travel website and must be signed by the traveler, their supervisor, and a member of the Superintendent's cabinet. 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

- A reservation confirmation email will be sent to the person requesting the reservation and the traveler.
- The district credit card will be used to guarantee the room only. Staff members are responsible for paying the bill.
- Hotels require a personal credit card upon check in for incidentals.

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, Food, Mileage, 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 eFinance.

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

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 Supervisors 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
- 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

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 “Request for SISD Travel Reservations” form to be completed and sent to the Travel Coordinator at Procurement Department.

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 “Request for SISD Travel Reservations” form and will be processed through the Travel Coordinator (ext. 6472) at Procurement Department.

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 “Request for SISD Travel Reservations.” 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 Manger (if different from principal/supervisor).

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

A copy of the conference 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 eFinance.

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.

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 an employee for another staff member's expenses incurred during travel on behalf of the district.

Travel Checklist

Conference Approval

- Request requisition/purchase order for conference registration
- Receive purchase order in eFinance
- Send registration forms to Accounts Payable with purchase order number

Reservations

- Complete "Request for SISD Travel Reservations" form
- Send completed form to Travel Coordinator (after all approving signatures)
- Hotel reservation only holds the room. The staff member is responsible for payment (include amount on travel advance or process requisition/purchase order for the hotel payment)
- Car rental reservation only holds the car rental. A major credit card is required for payment

Travel Advance

- Complete "Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report"
- Requisition/Purchase Order for travel advance
- "Receive" travel advance purchase order in eFinance
- Send Professional Trip Authorization and Expense Report with conference information with date and location to Accounts Payable

After Trip

- Complete "Final Expense Report" and submit 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
- Send the completed Professional Trip Authorization and Expense form with supporting to Accounts Payable with supporting documentation
- If money is owed to District, include cash, check or money order payable to Spring ISD