

Vallecitos Water District

MEETINGS, SEMINARS, AND CONFERENCES ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Directors and employees may attend conferences, meetings, seminars, training, and other functions for the purpose of furthering the interests of the District. Cost for travel and associated expenses for these events will be paid or reimbursed by the District under this policy. Directors' travel and payment of per diems for attendance at meetings, seminars, trainings, or conferences is authorized by District ordinance.

Policy

All travel should be prudently planned, ensuring the best interests of the public are served at the most reasonable cost. Expenses should be ordinary and necessary in order to conduct District business. Directors and employees are expected to abide by this policy, and exercise the same economy as a practical person when traveling, bearing in mind that public funds are in use.

The General Manager or designee will review expenses for compliance with this policy, and only those considered reasonable and necessary will be approved. Costs incurred for travel companions, pleasure tours, unrelated social events or side trips, and extended travel days are examples of expenses that are not allowed. If travel or registration expenses are incurred by the District and not used, the attendee may be required to reimburse the District unless the reason was due to personal illness, or events that prevented a good faith effort to attend. These events could include transportation delays or cancellations, meeting cancellations or date changes, or a sudden event within the District that requires the employee's presence.

Travel Arrangements

All travel arrangements for Directors will be made through the office of the General Manager. Employees must obtain department manager approval before registering or requesting travel arrangements. All overnight travel arrangements for employees will be made by the designated staff in Finance and Operations. Non-overnight travel arrangements for employees will be coordinated with the respective department staff. Attendees may, at the time of making travel arrangements, request a travel expense advance, not to exceed three hundred (\$300) dollars to cover incidental travel costs not prepaid by the District. The advance must be declared on the expense claim form and the attendee is responsible for reimbursing the District if the amount exceeds the total eligible expenses. Registration fees should take advantage of early registration discounts and be paid beforehand when possible. If registration fees cannot be paid ahead of time, a check will be delivered to the attendee for payment upon arrival.

Expense Claim Form

To properly track and verify all travel-related expenses, an expense claim form will be turned in by Directors for all travel, regardless of whether an expense was incurred. Employees must submit an expense claim form for overnight travel. For non-overnight travel, employees are responsible for submitting an expense claim form if reimbursement is requested for an expense that was not paid for by the District, including mileage. Claim forms with adequate supporting documentation must be submitted to Finance within 30 calendar days from the end of the travel.

Transportation

Travel should be by the most economical direct route considering the mode of transportation used. In all cases, if an attendee prefers one means of transportation over another for any reason, reimbursement or advance payment will be made for the lower cost option and the attendee is responsible for paying the difference in cost. Air transportation must be coach or economy class, utilizing frequent flyer mile credits, and promotional, corporate, or other discounts. Train transportation may be used when reasonable. Mileage for travel to an airport or train station may be reimbursable. A rental car may be used if local transportation by shuttle, bus, or taxi is not reasonably available. Multiple attendees are encouraged to share the use of rental cars, taxis, and shuttles when practical. Rental car insurance is not necessary and will not be reimbursed. Parking fees necessary to travel, such as airport, hotels, or event parking, are reimbursable.

The District will reimburse for approved mileage according to the IRS established rate. All mileage will be calculated based on the roundtrip distance between the District office and the event, if travel commences from the District. If travel commences from the employee's home, resulting in less mileage traveled to the event, the employee is responsible for adjusting the claimed mileage to reflect the lesser amount. District Managers may not claim mileage for travel within San Diego County. When multiple staff are attending and driving to the same event, a District vehicle will be utilized if available, and gasoline costs incurred will be reimbursed.

Lodging

Lodging will be paid by the District, for single occupancy, at the group or government rate established for the conference. Lodging for an overnight stay prior to the beginning or after the end of the function may be paid by the District if the function starts too early or ends too late to permit reasonable travel. The cost for all nonessential items charged to the lodging bill, such as movies, valet or laundry service, beverages and snacks (unless consumed as a regular meal), etc., are not eligible for reimbursement. The costs of basic travel amenities, such as shampoo, toothpaste, etc., are not eligible for reimbursement. Telephone calls to conduct District business, reasonable and necessary personal calls to attendee's residence, or local calls to arrange transportation, meals, and other related expenses are eligible for reimbursement.

Meals

The District will pay or reimburse Directors for actual and necessary meal expenses incurred in the performance of official duties while attending approved meetings, conferences, and seminars. Expenses include non-alcoholic beverages and reasonable tips. Meal expenses for employees while attending education courses, conferences & seminars, or on other District business, will follow the IRS regulations relating to meal reimbursements for government employees. Alcoholic beverages are not eligible for reimbursement. For overnight stays, the District will pay or reimburse reasonable costs for meals, including tips. For day trips, where the employee drives to and from the event in one day, the District will not pay or reimburse meal expenses unless it is determined that the meal is directly related to, or associated with, the active conduct of the District's business. Active conduct is when an employee is directly involved in the organization or presentation of the event, or when District business is the main focus.