



Southfield Public Schools Guidelines and Procedures for Conferences & Travel

The District will not entertain requests to attend conferences of competing interests (i.e. charter schools, private schools, etc.)

Guiding Principle

Conferences¹ and travel expenses are often scrutinized by the public, press and other government agencies. Therefore, it is essential that all SPS conferences and travel spending be necessary, reasonable and justifiable with **proper approvals and supporting documentation**.

Compliance with these procedures is mandated to uphold the integrity of the District's Board Policies in its support of staff members pursuing professional development and educational opportunities.

Requirements

Any Conference Request Form for out of state travel **must** be approved by Cabinet **prior** to processing. The Conference Request Form **must** be turned in to the Finance Department **14 days before** the advance payments are due – **NO EXCEPTIONS**

Travel

General Guidelines

- Only travel expenses strictly limited to legitimate business expenses will be reimbursed. **SPS shall not incur nor reimburse any expense that conveys to any employee a significant personal benefit unrelated to SPS's interests.** Expenses deemed unnecessary and/or excessive may not be reimbursed.
- Pre-travel authorization is required in all cases. A Conference Request form **must** be completed, submitted, and approved by all applicable approvers.
- Upon return, the reimbursement section of the Conference Request form **must** be completed and submitted to Finance within 14 days of the travel event, or costs are no longer eligible for reimbursement.
 - The Conference Request form must be submitted with all accompanying supporting documents.
- Employees should use common sense and look for the most cost-effective options when booking travel. Employees are encouraged to use aggregate travel sites such as Kayak, Expedia, Travelocity to find the best prices.
- When booking airline tickets, hotel rooms, and car rentals, employees should make reservations as far ahead of time as possible to obtain advance purchase discounts.
- There will likely be four (4) payment methods that are available for your needs
 - Reimbursement
 - Conference Registration, Lodging, Airfare, Ground transport (all authorized expenses can be paid by reimbursement)
 - P-Card
 - Conference Registration, Lodging, Airfare, Ground transport
 - All authorized expenses can be paid with the P-Card by the card holder
 - P-Card holder can pay authorized expenses for their team members for authorized travel events

TIPS:

- Plan ahead for better rates and availability
- Review your budget lines to ensure that the funds are available
 - **This is the time to request for budget transfers if necessary**
- In all cases, be cognizant that you are using **public funds**. All expenses should be reasonable, allowable and properly accounted for with all required documentation.



- Check (ACH) sent from Accounts Payable
 - Conference Registration, Lodging (not preferred for lodging)
- Advance Payment to the traveler (check/ACH)
 - Only when authorized
- Cancellations
 - If your event is cancelled you are responsible for contacting and cancelling all reservations.

Airline Travel

- Payment for airfare should be arranged and paid for prior to the conference. Flights made well in advance often have lower fares.
- If you seek a reimbursement for airfare that you paid, you must provide a copy of the itinerary that outlines the dates of travel and expenses along with a receipt for the paid airfare or credit card statement showing the transaction.
- Employees must purchase the lowest coach fare available. Upgrades to First or Business class will not be eligible for reimbursement.
- Airline club membership is not an allowable business expense.
- Employees are allowed to keep frequent flyer miles for their own use. However, if an employee decides to use frequent flyer miles for a business trip, SPS will not reimburse the employee for the value of the ticket.
- When parking at the airport for short-term parking, employees should park in daily, not hourly lots; for longer trips, employees should park in long-term parking. Employees should consider the use of taxi or car service to and from airports when the cost of the taxi or car is less than the cost of parking.
- Excess Baggage Fees may be authorized if approved before or after the travel event. Excess baggage fees will only be authorized for reimbursable if the excess baggage is essential to the travel event.
- Preferred payment – Reimbursement or P-Card

Ground Transportation – Rental Car

- Rental cars should only be used when other modes of transportation (taxi, train, car service, etc.) are not practical or economical.
- The approved car class is intermediate (or mid-size) unless the vehicle is being used for a group of four or more employees, in which case a full-size vehicle is allowed.
- Employees renting vehicles on SPS business are required to follow all local driving regulations, including the use of hands-free devices while using mobile phones. Any citations are the responsibility of the driver.
- If employees are not covered while renting cars under their own personal auto insurance or by their credit card, they should accept the optional insurance coverage offered by rental car companies. The cost of insurance will not be reimbursed.
- To avoid additional charges, cars should be returned with a full tank of gas. The SPS reserves the right not to reimburse employees for prepaid fuel, fuel service options, or for refueling by the rental agency.
- Employees have a responsibility to inspect the vehicle and document any damage before it is driven off the lot and when it is returned. Note any damage to the vehicle before signing the contract.
- Employees have a number of online tools available for obtaining driving directions when they travel. Accordingly, charges incurred for portable or in-car navigation systems are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Preferred payment – Reimbursement or P-Card



Ground Transportation – Personal Car

- Employees should use their personal vehicle for business travel when it is less expensive than alternative means of transportation.
- It is the employee's responsibility to carry, at their own expense, adequate insurance for the protection of the vehicle, driver and passengers.
- Employees will be reimbursed at a rate equivalent to the federal government approved [rate per mile](#).
 - The per-mile rate covers the cost of wear and tear as well as other operating costs.
- The federal government approved rates can be found on the SPS website or at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>
- Expenses such as car washes, gasoline, oil, and other maintenance are not reimbursable.
- Employees are responsible for the cost of repairs to their personal vehicle in the event of an accident as well as the cost of moving violations, parking tickets, traffic violations, etc.
- When preparing your conference request form, estimate the mileage using Google Maps and attach a printed copy.
 - When submitting for reimbursement after attendance, simply note the dollar amount for mileage in the REIMB EMPLOYEE column.
 - When leaving from home, report the shorter distance of
 1. from home to destination or
 2. work location to destination.
- Payment – Reimbursement

Regular commuting to and from schools is not reimbursable.

Ground Transportation – Train/Bus/Taxi or rideshare/Subway/Parking

- All reasonable transportation fares in conducting SPS business will be reimbursed. You must retain original receipts for reimbursement. When taking a taxi or rideshare, please ask for a receipt from the taxi or rideshare driver.
 - For the private transportation providers like Lyft and Uber, travelers should select the lowest rate available. Luxury vehicles are not an allowable expense.
- Fees for valet parking when self-parking is an option are not reimbursable as they are not considered a necessary expense.
- Preferred payment – Reimbursement or P-Card

Lodging

- Employees should stay in clean, safe, and comfortable accommodations. Only standard rooms should be booked. SPS will reimburse up to the [federal government per diem rate](#) for hotels. The rate varies by location and season and should be consulted prior to travel. If no accommodations are available at the per diem rate, consult the Finance Department to determine the best course of action.
- Payment for room reservations should be arranged and paid for prior to the conference. It is the conference attendee's responsibility to make the hotel reservation, ensuring MI Sales Tax is not included in the amount due if the conference is held in Michigan. While the District will pay for the hotel or convention tax, ***Southfield Public Schools is not liable for Michigan State sales tax².***
- Attach the reservation confirmation with amount due, payable to and where to mail payment. Complete the lodging information section and circle 'yes' to remit payment to vendor. Ensure the Vendor ID is in the system and matches to whom the check is payable and where it should be mailed.



- Preferred payment – Reimbursement or P-Card
 - Check payments are authorized however, not preferred
 - Hotels usually charge at the end of the stay. Any adjustment in the length of stay may generate a refund or an amount due which may be difficult to complete in a timely manner

Meals and Incidentals

- SPS will reimburse up to the [federal government per diem rate](#) for meals and incidental expenses. The rate varies by location and should be consulted prior to travel. On the first and last day of travel, employees are eligible for 75% of the per diem – pursuant to federal government rules. Receipts are required to receive reimbursement.
- The maximum reimbursement for a tip is 15%. Detailed/itemized receipts are required for each meal; debit/charge card receipts/statements are not acceptable. If the conference fee/agenda includes meal(s), you will not be reimbursed for a separate meal since the district has essentially paid for the meal with the registration fee.
- When preparing the estimate of the total conference costs, be sure to reduce your daily meal stipend by whatever meals are included in the conference registration fee.
- Preferred payment – Reimbursement or P-Card

Alcohol is not a reimbursable expense under any circumstance.

Registration

Payment for registration should be arranged and paid for prior to the conference. Complete the registration information section and circle 'yes' to remit payment to the vendor. Attach your Registration Confirmation with the amount due, payable to and where to mail payment. Ensure the Vendor ID is in the system and matches to whom the check is payable and where it should be mailed. **If you fail to plan in advance you will need to pay for the registration with your own funds.** Provided that you have proper receipt, you will be reimbursed. Take advantage of "Early Registration" by completing this process early.

- Preferred payment – Reimbursement, P-Card or Check

FEDERALLY FUNDED TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

Federal grants including Head Start are governed by these guidelines as well as the Federal Travel Regulations FTR 301-11.300 through 306³ and OMB 2 CFR Part 200⁴. **All expenditures must be allowable, necessary, reasonable, and approved in the grant application. As such, in some cases, some expenditures may not be considered necessary and therefore unallowable for reimbursement purposes. (Title grants for example do not reimburse for tips.)**

Parents, Head Start Personnel, and Policy Council members can receive an advance for travel related expenditures. This eliminates financial barriers to receiving training and programming updates. Travelers for Head Start Program purposes may be advanced travel related expenses and are required to follow the conference and travel procedures as outlined within this document. The traveler's signature is required on the conference request form to confirm their understanding that **failure to submit acceptable receipts within 14 days following the trip may require refund of funds advanced.**

Detailed/itemized, receipts must be submitted. If there is a difference between the amount advanced and actual expenses, the traveler will either: be reimbursed for expenses in excess of receipts or; in the event that the advanced amount exceeds the total of the receipts, the traveler must refund the difference.

Failure of the traveler to provide the requested documents in all cases may be grounds to disallow the traveler from future advances.



Conference Request Forms / Travel Packets Completion

1. Assemble Necessary Information

- Use the Conference/Travel Checklist sheet to gather all the information for the travel request
- Obtain the conference background material and Agenda
- Include start time for the conference for flight booking purposes
- Obtain cost information (Air, Ground, Registration, Hotel and Per Diem) from Expedia, Hotels.com, Southwest.com or other similar sources

- i. Obtain the **W-9 and credit card authorization form from the Hotel** (a Vendor Registration Form (VRF) is not required from the hotel)
 - a. Send W-9 and VRF (if acquired) to Purchasing
- ii. Obtain the W-9 and VRF **from the organization** conducting the conference
 - a. Send W-9 and VRF to Purchasing
- iii. **Complete your W-9 and Vendor registration form and send it to Purchasing (See the orange Box to the right)**
- iv. Determine if the use of a P-Card is required

Important note to the traveler:

You will be reimbursed through **Accounts Payable**

This will require you to complete a **W-9 form and a Vendor Registration Form** and send it to the **Purchasing department.**

Even though you are an employee you will need to complete these documents in order to receive your reimbursement through accounts payable.

You will not receive your reimbursement through the payroll system as before.

- Determine government rate for that city by going to www.gsa.gov/perdiem
 - i. If no hotel is within the government rate complete the Hotel Exception Form
 - ii. Review budget and account number that covers conference fees

Do not delay in sending the W-9 and Vendor registration forms to Purchasing

2. Submit packet for approvals

- Completed Conference Request Form (~~Droplet~~)
 - i. Attach completed checklist
 - ii. Attach conference Information sheets/Agenda
 - iii. Attach flight options & cost
 - iv. Attach hotel options & cost
 - 1. Attach GSA Per Diem Sheet
 - 2. Attach Hotel Exception (if applicable)
 - v. Attach registration cost
 - vi. Attach documents that support other cost
 - 1. Google Maps for Mileage
 - 2. GSA Per Diem for Meals and Incidentals

3. Approval

- Submit the completed packet through ~~Droplet~~ for the following approvals
 - i. Supervisor
 - ii. Grants (if applicable)
 - iii. Executive Cabinet Member

iv. THE APPROVED PACKET GETS RETURNED TO THE TRAVELER TO COMPLETE THE NEXT STEPS



Once the travel event has been approved, you may book your hotel, flight registration and other listed expenses to lock in those prices.

DO NOT DELAY BOOKING THESE EXPENSES AFTER YOU HAVE RECEIVED ALL APPROVALS.

You must have all approvals PRIOR to moving on to the next step.

4. BusinessPLUS Entry

- Once you receive approval, **submit your travel packet to the secretary of your school / department for entry into BusinessPLUS**
 - i. Enter Requisition for the conference registration (if not using P-Card or reimbursement)
 - ii. Enter Requisition for lodging (if not using P-Card or reimbursement)
 - iii. Enter Requisition for reimbursement to acquire a PO for the traveler
 1. Per diem, Mileage, Airfare, Parking or other expenses to be reimbursed
 2. Once the PO is approved you will receive a copy in your email
- NOTE: Attach the approved packet to the requisition as supporting documents for the request.**
3. Once the PO is approved, enter the PO number on any invoices that were generated for hotels, registration, etc.
 4. Send invoices to Accounts Payable for payment
 - a. Receive on the PO so that the payment can be released

5. P-Card Usage (if applicable)

- Obtain P-card usage approval from the P-Card holder of your school or department
 - i. Complete the P-Card Usage Request (if applicable)
- Obtain the CC Authorization form from the vendor (hotel)
 - i. Have the P-Card holder sign and return it to the vendor.

IF THIS IS IN-STATE TRAVEL, SEND THE STATE TAX EXEMPTION FORM WITH THE CC AUTHORIZATION FORM

- ii. Make arrangements with the P-Card holder for time to use the P-Card (online, phone etc.)
 - iii. Complete the P-Card purchases
- Ensure to return to the P-Card Holder the entire approved travel packet for their monthly reconciliation

6. Complete the packet

- Continue using the Travel Request Checklist sheet to complete travel packet and acquire all the remaining information

7. Attend the conference

- Retain any name badges and or conference literature as proof of attendance
 - i. Proof of attendance can also be pictures **of you** at the event etc.

8. **After the Travel** - Upon return, reimbursement request must be completed within 14 days or costs are no longer eligible for reimbursement.

- **The Traveler** must complete the reimbursement section of the Conference Request form at the conclusion of the travel event and submit their reimbursement packet to Accounts Payable (accountspayable@southfieldk12.org) with all the applicable supporting documents



- The packet should consist of the following items **in this order**
 - i. Conference Authorization Form **with the “Actual” column completed**
 - ii. Purchase Order
 - iii. Receipts
 1. Conference registration (if applicable)
 2. Airline Receipts (if applicable)
 3. Hotel Receipt (must show zero balance) (if applicable)
 4. Ground Transportation Receipts (if applicable)
 - a. Taxi or Rideshare
 - b. Car Rental Receipt
 - c. Parking
 - d. Maps for mileage claimed
 5. Meals
 - a. Receipt must be the final receipt and the itemized (detailed) receipt
 - b. If your receipt does not show the final payment **AND** the details, your request will not be allowed
 - c. Alcohol is not a reimbursable expense under any circumstance
 6. Proof of attendance

Any actual expenses that goes over the estimate on the Conference Form by 15% or more will need to be re-approved. If the overage is not approved, this could generate a payment due to the District in the amount of the unapproved overage.

¹ Conferences are any event attended by an employee where a registration is required.

² Southfield Public Schools is Exempt from Michigan State sales. Other states may or may not except Southfield Public Schools tax exempt status.

³ <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-41/subtitle-F/chapter-301/subchapter-B/part-301-11?toc=1>

⁴ <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200?toc=1>