

Board Policy #:
Adopted/Ratified: July 26, 2022
Revision Date:



Travel Expense Policy

Overview

It is the policy of The Cottonwood School to reimburse staff for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred during approved work-related travel.

Employees seeking reimbursement should incur the lowest reasonable travel expenses and exercise care to avoid impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Reimbursement is allowed only when reimbursement has not been, and will not be, received from other sources. If a circumstance arises that is not specifically covered in this travel policy, then the most conservative course of action should be taken. Any travel expenses paid for with a Cottonwood School credit card should adhere to all credit card, travel, and purchasing policies and guidelines. Travel expenses paid for with a Cottonwood School credit card are not eligible for reimbursement.

Business travel policies are aligned with School reimbursement rules. All business-related travel paid with The Cottonwood School's funds must comply with school expenditure policies. The Cottonwood School will not reimburse any alcohol purchases under any circumstance.

Authorization and responsibility

Staff travel must be authorized by senior employees (Director) at least 2 weeks before the expected travel date. Travelers should verify that planned travel is eligible for reimbursement before making travel arrangements. Within 30 days of completion of a trip, the traveler must submit a travel reimbursement form and supporting documentation to obtain reimbursement of expenses.

An individual may not approve their own travel or reimbursement. The travel reimbursement form must be signed by the Executive Director and the employee's Direct Supervisor.

The Executive Director or Director of Finance will review expenditures and withhold reimbursement if there is reason to believe that the expenditures are inappropriate or extravagant.

Personal funds

Travelers should review reimbursement guidelines before spending personal funds for business travel to determine if such expenses are reimbursable. See Section II: Travel Expenses/Procedures for details. The Cottonwood School reserves the right to deny reimbursement of travel-related expenses for failure to comply with policies and procedures.

Travelers who use personal funds to facilitate travel arrangements will not be reimbursed until after the trip occurs and proper documentation is submitted.

Vacation in conjunction with business travel

In cases in which vacation time is added to a business trip, any cost variance in airfare, car rental or lodging must be clearly identified on the Travel Request form. The Cottonwood School will not prepay any personal expenses with the intention of being "repaid" at a later time, nor will any personal expenses be reimbursed.

Exceptions

Occasionally it may be necessary for travelers to request exceptions to this travel policy. Requests for exceptions to the policy must be made in writing and approved by the Executive Director or by the Director of Finance. Exceptions related to the Executive Director's or the Director of Finance' expenses must be submitted to the opposite person or to the treasurer of the board of trustees for approval. In most instances, the expected turnaround time for review and approval is five business days.

Travel Expenses/Procedures

General information

Authorized business travel for staff that includes prepayments must be pre-approved by the Executive Director.

Reimbursement of parking, mileage, and ferry or bus passes do not require receipts if they are under \$10. Receipts for reimbursement of expenses over \$10 are to be submitted on a travel reimbursement form.

Permissible prepaid travel expenses

Before the travel, The Cottonwood School may issue prepayments for airfare, rail transportation, rental vehicles, conference registration fees and hotel accommodations. Applicable policies and methods of payments for these prepayments follow.

Airfare. Travelers are expected to obtain the lowest available airfare that reasonably meets business travel needs. Airfare may be prepaid by the business office.

Travelers are encouraged to book flights at least 30 days in advance to avoid premium airfare pricing.

Coach class or economy tickets must be purchased for domestic or international flights with flight time totaling less than five consecutive hours excluding layovers.

A less-than-first-class ticket (i.e., business class) may be purchased at The Cottonwood School's discretion for domestic or international flights with flight time exceeding five consecutive hours excluding layovers.

Airfare may be purchased with a credit card or check through the business office with a request for payment form.

Rail transportation. The Cottonwood School will prepay rail transportation provided that the cost does not exceed the cost of the least expensive airfare.

Rental vehicles. The Cottonwood School will pay for approved use of a rental vehicle. See the section on reimbursements below in this section.

Taxi/UBER/LYFT Employees will be reimbursed for their transportation to and from the hotel including the cost of any gratuity or tip for each trip equaling 15%.

Conference registration fees. Conference registration fees can be prepaid with a credit card or check through the business office with a request for payment form. Business-related banquets or meals that are considered part of the conference can be paid with the registration fees; however, such meals must be deducted from the traveler's per diem allowance.

Travel advances. Cash advances are authorized for specific situations that might cause undue financial hardship for business travelers. These situations are limited to staff traveling on behalf of The Cottonwood School. A maximum of 75 percent of the total estimated cost can be advanced.

Expenses associated with the travel must be reconciled and substantiated within two weeks of the return date. The traveler must repay The Cottonwood School for any advances in excess of the approved reimbursable expenses. The department initiating the travel is responsible for notifying the business office to deposit any excess funds into the appropriate departmental account.

Travel advances are processed by submitting a completed Request for Payment form and Travel Request form to the business office. Reimbursement for any remaining expenses is processed on a Travel Reimbursement form approved by the designated approval authority.

Reimbursements

Requests for reimbursements of travel-related expenses are submitted on a Travel Reimbursement form. This form must be accompanied by supporting documentation and must be signed by the Executive director and the employee's Direct Supervisor.

These forms must be submitted to the business office within two weeks after the trip is completed. Travel Reimbursement forms not submitted within this time frame require exception approval from the Executive Director or from the Director of Finance.

Reimbursement of travel expenses is based on documentation of reasonable and actual expenses supported by the original, itemized receipts where required. These expenses are only eligible for reimbursement if they were not prepaid by the business office or using a Cottonwood School credit card. Reimbursements that may be paid by The Cottonwood School are shown below.

Airfare. If the airfare was not prepaid by the business office or using a Cottonwood School credit card, an original itemized airline receipt, an e-ticket receipt/statement or an Internet receipt/statement is required. The receipt must show the method of payment and indicate that payment was made.

Rail transportation. If rail transportation was not prepaid by the business office, an original itemized receipt, original e-ticket receipt/statement or Internet receipt/statement is required. The receipt must show the method of payment and indicate that payment was made.

Automobile (personally owned—domestic travel). A valid driver's license issued within the United States and personal automobile insurance are required for expenses to be reimbursed.

Drivers should be aware of the extent of coverage (if any) provided by their automobile insurance company for travel that is business or not personal in nature.

Reimbursement for use of a personal automobile is based on The Cottonwood School's mileage rate.

A staff travel reimbursement form is required for reimbursement of all vehicle-related expenses, including gasoline, wear and tear, and personal auto insurance. Staff will be reimbursed at the current IRS published rate.

Automobile (rental—domestic travel). Reimbursement for a commercial rental vehicle as a primary mode of transportation is authorized only if the rental vehicle is more economical than any other type of public transportation, or if the destination is not otherwise accessible. Vehicle rental at a destination city is reimbursable. Original receipts are required.

The Cottonwood School authorizes reimbursement for the most economic vehicle available. In certain circumstances larger vehicles may be rented, with supervisory approval. The rental agreement must clearly show the date and the points of departure/arrival, as well as the total cost. Drivers must adhere to the rental requirements, and restrictions must be followed. Original receipts are required.

When vehicle rentals are necessary, The Cottonwood School encourages travelers to purchase collision damage waiver (CDW) and loss damage waiver (LDW) coverage. The Cottonwood School will reimburse the cost of CDW and LDW coverage; all other insurance reimbursements will be denied.

Drivers should be aware of the extent of coverage (if any) provided by their automobile insurance company for travel that is business or not personal in nature.

Parking fees, tolls and other incidental costs associated with the vehicle use that are not covered by the rental agreement may be submitted for reimbursement.

Travelers are strongly encouraged to fill the gas tank before returning the vehicle to the rental agency to avoid service fees and more expensive fuel rates.

Conference registration fees. If the conference fee was not prepaid, The Cottonwood School will reimburse these fees, including business-related banquets or meals that are part of the conference registration. Original receipts to support the payment are required. If the conference does not provide a receipt, then a canceled check, credit card slip/statement or documentation that the amount was paid is required for reimbursement.

A prorated amount for the meals provided must be deducted from the traveler's meal allowance. See Business Meals for more detail. Entertainment activities such as golf outings and sightseeing tours will not be reimbursed.

Registration fees paid directly by an individual will not be reimbursed until the conference is completed.

Lodging (commercial). The cost of overnight lodging (room rate and tax only) will be reimbursed to the traveler if the authorized travel is 120 miles or more from the traveler's home or primary worksite and is not traveling to a state that is on the list of California's ban on state-funded and state-sponsored travel list as per the Governor of California

Exceptions to this restriction may be approved in writing by the executive director or by the Director of Finance.

The Cottonwood School will reimburse lodging expenses at reasonable, single occupancy or standard business room rates. When the hotel or motel is the conference or convention site, reimbursement will be limited to the conference rate.

Only single room rates are authorized for payment or reimbursement unless the second party is representing the agency in an authorized capacity. If the lodging receipt shows more than a single occupancy, the single room rate must be noted. If reimbursement for more than the single room rate is requested, the name of the second person must be included.

Business Meals. Business meals are reimbursed for in-state overnight travel that is 120 miles or more from the traveler's home or primary worksite.

Meal allowances are applicable for all out-of-state travel that is 120 miles or more from the traveler's home or primary worksite.

The Cottonwood School meal allowance is \$60 per day. A general guideline is:

- Breakfast - \$15
- Lunch - \$15
- Dinner - \$30

Meal allowances are based on departure and return times over the entire 24-hour day and are prorated accordingly.

If a free meal is served on the plane, included in a conference registration fee, built in to the standard, single hotel room rate or replaced by a legitimate business meal, the per diem allowance for that meal may not be claimed.

Meal allowances are reimbursed after the trip is completed. Reimbursements will not be provided to employees traveling with a Cottonwood School issued credit card. In this case, itemized receipts should be included with in accordance with the credit card reconciliation process and should not exceed \$60 per day.

Travelers are required to follow The Cottonwood School expenditure policies when requesting reimbursement for business meals. Original itemized receipts are required. Any alcohol purchased should be on a separate itemized receipt and is not eligible for reimbursement or for payment using The Cottonwood School's credit card.

Business expenses. Business expenses, including faxes, photocopies, Internet charges, data ports and business telephone calls incurred while on travel status, can be reimbursed. Original itemized receipts are required.

Parking. Original receipts are required for parking fees (including airport parking. The lodging bill can be used as a receipt when charges are included as part of the overnight stay.

Telephone calls. The costs of personal telephone calls are the responsibility of the individual.

Tolls. Original receipts are required for tolls totaling \$10 or more.

Miscellaneous transportation. Receipts are required for taxi, bus, subway, metro, ferry and other modes of transportation.

Non-reimbursable Travel Expenses

The following items that may be associated with business travel will not be reimbursed by The Cottonwood School:

- Airline club memberships.
- Airline upgrades.
- Alcohol
- Business class for domestic flights or first class for all flights.
- Child care, babysitting, house-sitting, or pet-sitting/kennel charges.
- Commuting between home and the primary work location.
- Costs incurred by traveler's failure to cancel travel or hotel reservations in a timely fashion.
- Evening or formal wear expenses.
- Haircuts and personal grooming.
- Laundry and dry cleaning.
- Passports, vaccinations and visas when not required as a specific and necessary condition of the travel assignment.
- Personal entertainment expenses, including in-flight movies, headsets, health club facilities, hotel pay-per-view movies, in-theater movies, social activities and related incidental costs.
- Travel accident insurance premiums or purchase of additional travel insurance.
- Other expenses not directly related to business travel.
- Traffic Citations

Travel for Non-Employees

Additional costs for travel, lodging, meal or other travel expenses for spouses or other family members will not be reimbursed unless the individual has a bona fide School purpose for engaging in the travel or attending the event. Such travel is generally limited to senior management and should occur infrequently.