



Sutter County Administrative Policy

POLICY: 1001	TITLE: Travel and Business Expense Reimbursement Policy	
SECTION: 1000 Transportation & Travel	ADOPTED:	05/14/2024
ORDINANCE OR RESOLUTION: None	EFFECTIVE:	07/01/2024
SPONSORING DEPARTMENT: Auditor-Controller	ATTACHMENTS: 1	
SUPERSEDES: July 1994	PAGES: 4	

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria and approval authority for reimbursement of travel and business expenses for County employees, Department/Agency Head, Boards and Commissions and Elected Officials. This policy replaces the Travel and Business Expense Policy dated July 1994.

In addition, this policy is to ensure that all expenses incurred by County employees while on County business, including but not limited to travel, meals and lodging, are obtained in an efficient manner and at the lowest possible cost and to provide documentation guidelines for reimbursement.

This policy is intended to satisfy the requirements of Government Code §53232.2(b):

Effective 1/1/2007, if a local agency reimburses members of its legislative body who incurred expenses while on travel related to official business shall adopt a written policy. The reimbursement of travel expenses shall be for actual and necessary transportation, meals, lodging and other reasonable incidental expenses incurred performing duties that is beneficial to the County.

AUTHORITY:

The primary review and approval of employee reimbursement shall be the responsibility of the department head or his/her designee(s). Approved reimbursements shall be submitted to the Auditor-Controller for review and payment, subject to reasonable audit adjustments to conform with the requirements of this policy. Disputed claims shall be subject to further review by the County Administrative Officer.

APPLICABILITY:

This policy shall apply to all Sutter County employees and, when appropriate under these rules, members of Boards and Commissions.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Auditor-Controller

In accordance with California Government Code §53232.2(b), the Auditor-Controller will be responsible for the development of procedures to be used in the implementation of this policy. These procedures are included as Attachment A and will be distributed to County departments and posted on the County's intranet. Revision of these procedures will be at the discretion of the Auditor-Controller as required by law, Internal Revenue Service, Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and, practical necessity. The Auditor-Controller will be responsible for updating the *Mileage and Meals Reimbursement Rate* on an annual basis which is accessible in SCNet under the Auditor-Controller's Office.

County Departments

Department responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Implement travel and business expense procedures as prescribed by the Auditor-Controller's office;
2. Review and approve *Travel & Business Expense Reports/Claim* before submitting to the Auditor-Controller's office;
3. Maintain a system of control over their expenditures and minimize the risk of loss and/or misuse of public funds.

DEFINITIONS:

The term "Bi-County" refers to Yuba-Sutter Counties.

Travel expense refers to expenses incurred while a person is traveling away from home for a County business purpose. Examples are meals, lodging, eligible mileage, and other reasonable incidental expenses.

GENERAL REIMBURSEMENT POLICY:

When it is necessary for County employees to travel or incur expenses on County business, it is the intent of the Board of Supervisors that employees not be required to bear an undue burden as a result of that requirement, nor are employees expected to accrue any personal benefit from the conduct of County business. The Board of Supervisors has therefore adopted a policy that County employees shall be eligible for reimbursement for all necessary and reasonable expenses incurred when performing County business.

Meal reimbursement

The reimbursement for meal expense incurred while outside the Bi-County area is subject to reimbursement guidelines under section 2.4 *Per Diem Rate* and section 2.7 *Meals*. Travel meals are not the same as overtime meals. Both cannot be claimed simultaneously for the same meal.

Mileage reimbursement

The reimbursement for personal vehicle mileage used to conduct County business shall be the standard mileage rate set forth by the IRS.

Transportation

County automobiles will be used when available as determined by the department head. Only persons employed by the County shall be transported in a County automobile except transportation of clients in accordance with normal operation of the department.

Lodging

Reimbursement will be allowed for lodging obtained at a distance of 40 miles in connection with travel on official County business. If lodging is needed to attend a conference, the cost per night shall not exceed the group rate published by the sponsor of the conference provided if such rate is available. Reimbursement for the cost of lodging is limited to actual cost incurred and will be reimbursed only at the single room rate unless more than one employee shares room accommodation. Lodging receipt must accompany claims for reimbursement.

Contract Travel Agency

The County has enrolled into the Statewide Travel Program. The preferred method for arranging travel involving airfare, car rentals, and/or an overnight stay in a hotel is through the CalTravelStore, the State's only authorized travel agency.

Non-Travel Business Expense

Meals Unrelated to Travel

Reimbursement will be provided for the actual cost of a meal for non-Sutter County employee who serves on a personnel interview panel and the cost of the County employee's meal who escorts the panel. Similarly, when authorized by the department head, meals may be provided to other governmental employees or private individuals who, at the County's request provide services gratuitously which benefit the County, or in other business situations of potential benefit to the County. Submission of reimbursement must be accompanied by original receipt and must be authorized by the department head.

When a County officer or department head hosts a conference or meeting that will be of benefit to the County of Sutter, the County may provide meals to both external attendees and County employees only with prior approval from the County Administrator Office. The expenses of that meeting shall be reimbursable at actual cost, but the total cost per attendee shall not exceed the per diem meal reimbursement rates for employees on official travel. Original receipts and documentation of pre-approval must be attached to the claim/expense report.

Qualifying Work-Related Education

Reimbursements for qualifying work-related education as defined in the Human Resources' "Rules Governing Employee Compensation, Benefits & Working Conditions" must be submitted with substantiating records indicating eligibility of reimbursement, proof of payment, appropriate authorization, and forms from Human Resources.

Claim/ Expense Report Procedures:

No reimbursement for travel and business expense shall be paid without submitting an expense report, or other form(s) prescribed by the Auditor-Controller from time to time. Receipts must be attached for air travel, automobile rental, registration fees and other expenses for which receipts are normally issued. Failure to complete forms as required or to submit the proper receipts may be grounds for denying reimbursement.

Other documentations signed by the employee, department head, and where appropriate the County Administrative Officer or the Board of Supervisors, must be submitted to the Auditor-Controller.

Accountable Plan

The County's Travel and Business Expense policy follows the *IRS Publication 15 (Circular E), Accountable Plan*. Under the accountable plan, reimbursement or allowance arrangement require the employees to meet all three of the following rules:

- 1) Allowable and reasonable expenses are incurred and paid by the employee while performing services related to official business on behalf of the County. The employee may receive an advance for the expenses 30 days prior.
- 2) The employee is required to account for the expenses within 60 days of travel and,
- 3) Return the excess advance or request reimbursement. On a quarterly basis, the responsible County department notifies the employee to resolve the outstanding advance within 120 days.

If one of the rules is not met, payments to employee for travel and other necessary business expenses will be treated as wages and subjected to taxes.

Double Claiming

Claiming reimbursement for the same costs from more than one source (e.g., submitting claims for reimbursement to a State or Federal agency or other source and to the County) is prohibited by this policy. However, if another source provides only partial reimbursement, the balance up to the limits authorized by this policy, may be claimed. Appropriate documentation must be submitted with the claims (e.g., the State claim form showing the costs that are being paid by the State).

Advances

Funds may be advanced by the Auditor-Controller for any travel or business expense covered by the policy 21 days prior to the employee incurring the expenses.

A final claim/expense report identifying actual expenses shall be submitted to the Auditor-Controller within 60 days of return from the trip for which the advance was issued along with any advance in excess of the claimed amount within 120 days or prior to termination of County employment, whichever event occurs first,

Questions on Application and Interpretation of Policy

Questions concerning application and interpretation of this policy should first be directed to the Auditor-Controller. In the event of a disagreement, the County Administrative Officer should be consulted for further review. County Counsel will be consulted for legal review as appropriate.

ATTACHMENT A: Travel and Business Expense Accounting Procedures