

Division of Financial Operations: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES:

Travel and Conferences



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Travel and Conferences

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Introduction

This Standard Operating Procedures manual concerns the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) guidelines for employee travel, including travel to, attendance at, and participation in conferences.

Participation includes but is not limited to participation as speaker and/or panel member.

Please note that this chapter does **NOT** include procedures regarding trips for students. These procedures are detailed in [Chancellor's Regulation A-670](#).

This chapter includes procedures for the following types of travel:

- Local travel (travel within the 5 boroughs of New York City)
- Out-of-town travel (outside NYC yet within the United States)
- International travel (travel outside the United States)

This chapter also includes the following related topics:

- Responsibilities of the traveler
- Responsibilities of the approver
- Meetings and conferences (both on-site and off-site)
- Use of personal vehicle

Chapter 1: Responsibilities of the Traveler and His/Her Supervisor

1.1 General Responsibilities

Travelers and approvers who intentionally make or cause a false entry to be made in any of the DOE's systems of record in order to defraud the DOE or the City are subject to administrative and/or disciplinary action, including termination and criminal prosecution. Electronic and hard copy travel forms are business records of the DOE. The information contained in the travel form(s), including, but not limited to, representations as to the cost and official business nature of the travel are relied upon by the DOE in making payments/reimbursements.

In order to be charged to a federal grant, all travel costs must meet federal allowability rules.

Briefly, costs must be reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the federal award. Travelers and their approvers are responsible for ensuring that these costs are eligible to be charged to a federal grant.

1.2 Responsibility of the Traveler

Travelers must comply with DOE rules and regulations as detailed in this and any other related SOP document(s) including Chancellor Regulation C-110 and must also comply with applicable City, State and Federal law, including but not limited to the New York City Conflicts of Interest Laws. All travel must be approved by the approving authority(s) **prior to travel** via [TRAC](#).

1.3 Approving Authority and Responsibility

It is the approver's responsibility to ensure that the trip had educational or professional value and the funds are available.

For school personnel, the approving authority is the principal.

For principals, the request is electronically routed to the designated FSC (Field Support Center) authority for compliance review and then to the superintendent for approval.

For central travelers, the approving authority is the executive director or head of the office.

For international trips, the superintendent or the head of the office must verify that the destination country is safe according to the [travel warnings](#) issued by the U.S. Department of State. **See Section 4.5 for further approvals for International travel.**

Chapter 2: Travel Reimbursement and Approval Certification (TRAC) Application

2.1 Overview of the TRAC Application

Travel requests should be filed through the TRAC application with the exception of local travel (see section 2.2 below). This application allows the traveler to request permission from his/her [approving authority](#), to travel, and to electronically apply for reimbursement of eligible travel-related expenditures. To initiate a travel request, the traveler must access the [TRAC form](#).

Please note that the implementation of TRAC has made previously used manual travel and conference forms obsolete.

TRAC does not replace the [Travel Related Expenses Paid for by Non-Governmental Entities Form](#), which must be used when a non-governmental entity offers to pay for or defray the cost of official activities engaged in by DOE travelers.

2.2 Travel not requiring a TRAC Request

- Local travel via public transportation does not require prior approval in TRAC. Local travel is defined as all travel within, or to a destination within, the boundaries of New York City.

2.3 Travel Requiring a TRAC Request

- Local travel using the traveler's personal vehicle. Personal vehicles may only be used if public transportation is absolutely impossible or grossly impractical. It is up to the approving authority to determine if this is the most cost-effective and efficient mode of transportation.
- All out-of-town travel, defined as travel to a destination outside of New York City for any official DOE business, must be submitted through TRAC.
- There must be corresponding approved budget to support the cost of all travel expenses to be incurred.

2.4 Using TRAC

- Once the traveler initiates a TRAC request, a TRAC Projected Expenses (PE) number is assigned to the record. The TRAC request is then electronically transmitted to the approving authority. Note that a submitted TRAC request with a PE number is not an approved travel request; approval to travel is not official until all levels of approval have been entered.
- Final disposition of the travel request will be communicated to the traveler via email, once the request has been approved or denied.
- If the request is rejected, the traveler has an opportunity to resubmit the request after correcting the request to reflect feedback received from the approving authority. To do so, the traveler will access the TRAC record, select Edit Rejected TRAC, and modify the request as appropriate.
- There must be corresponding approved budget to support the cost of the travel. Upon approval for use of a personal vehicle or for out-of-town travel, the required account information provided on the TRAC form will be pre-encumbered in FAMIS. For additional information on the pre-encumbrance process, view the [TRAC Quick Reference Guide](#) or [TRAC Guide](#).
- Once all travel is completed, the traveler returns to TRAC, enters the TRAC PE number, and enters and confirms the actual expenses. Additionally, s/he must electronically transmit supporting documentation (itemized travel receipts and/or invoices) to the approving authority via scan/upload into TRAC. Original

documentation is required for the subsequent financial processing and approval of the TRAC reimbursement (the traveler may redact personal information).

- Note that all eligible travel-related expenditures not covered by a purchase order (PO) will be charged against the TRAC projected expenses.
- Ineligible or inappropriate expenditures will not be reimbursed by the DOE. **Details on eligible and appropriate expenditures are available in Chapters 3 and 4 of this document.**
- Procurement cards (P cards) may not be used for travel expenses as described in this document. P Cards must not be used when for any costs when on an approved trip.
- Only anticipated expenses identified and approved in TRAC may be submitted for actual reimbursement based upon upload of itemized travel receipts and invoices.
- Approved TRAC records and related supporting documentation are official DOE records. Even though TRAC was used in the approval process, all TRAC documents and supporting documentation must be printed and maintained in hard-copy form at the payment processing site (school or office) for at least six years. These documents may be requested for audit or review.

In submitting requests via TRAC (i.e., request to travel or request for reimbursement of related travel expenses, and when applicable request to participate on a panel and/or present or speak at a conference), the traveler is certifying that the information contained and/or provided in the TRAC record is true and accurate, including, but not limited to the representations as to the cost and official business nature of the travel.

Note: Supporting documentation which is required to be uploaded into TRAC includes but is not limited to original receipts (credit card or bankcard statement, front and back image of canceled check, hotel invoices, taxi, parking (*mileage validation required via MapQuest, Google Maps, etc.), and other documentation of costs where applicable), a statement of the business purpose of the travel, an agenda of the meeting or conference attended (if applicable), and any other document that demonstrates that the business discussed while away from the worksite relates to the traveler's duties and responsibilities.

*Mileage validation is required for all out-of-town use of personal automobile and for local use of automobile when claiming mileage i.e., in excess of 30 miles.

Chapter 3: Transportation and Travel

In all travel situations, the most economical and practical means of transportation must be selected. Additional factors, including the number of people traveling, luggage and materials to be transported, meeting schedules, employee health, safety, cost of employee time and the impact on the employee's ability to efficiently conduct official business upon arrival, should be considered.

3.1 Transportation between Home and Primary Work Site

Commuting expenses - that is, expenses associated with the trip from home to and the last trip from the primary worksite – are not reimbursable. However, if the traveler has to travel to a temporary field location (location other than the traveler's primary worksite where a traveler has been assigned to work on a temporary basis) and the traveling costs to the field location exceed the traveling costs to the primary worksite, the traveler may be reimbursed for the cost in excess of the regular commuting costs.

3.2 Most Efficient and Cost Effective Method of Travel

Travel should be by the most efficient and cost effective method of transportation available. Coach fares and/or economy class for air travel must be used. **DOE's contracted travel vendor is obligated to obtain the most economical air fares.**

3.3 Travel by Other than Public Transportation

If a traveler is unable to use public transportation and the site supervisor has approved the use of other means of transportation, when completing the TRAC request, the traveler must clearly indicate why public transportation could not be used.

3.4 Metro Cards

Schools and central offices are authorized to maintain a supply of MetroCards for use by staff required to travel for official business, and in certain circumstances, individuals not employed by the DOE who may be asked to render a service to a particular school or site.

MetroCards must be stored in a secure location with access limited to authorized staff. The school or central office must designate an individual who will act as the "custodian" of the MetroCards.

The "custodian" distributing the MetroCards must maintain a record containing the following details when distributing a MetroCard to a traveler, and where applicable, to non-DOE individuals:

- Traveler's name
- Date(s) of travel
- Traveler type (e.g., DOE employee, student, parent)
- Purpose of trip (e.g., meeting, student trip)
- MetroCard serial number

3.5 E-Z Pass

Travelers who use a personal E-Z Pass account to pay for tolls incurred on official business will be reimbursed upon production of a toll record issued by E-Z Pass. Although receipts are not available in the E-Z Pass

lanes, E-Z Pass statements are mailed or emailed to account holders. More immediate access to the toll record can be obtained through the [EZ Pass Web site](#).

Note that E-Z Pass accounts may be established in the name of the DOE only for vehicles used *exclusively* for official business.

3.6 Travel by Air, Rail, and Bus

Travel by commuter rail and bus service such as Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road, and New Jersey Transit, or equivalents outside the NYC metropolitan area, should be reimbursed through TRAC.

For the purpose of arranging air, AMTRAK, and bus travel, the DOE maintains contracts with travel agencies. Contact and contract information for these vendors can be obtained from the **DOE's Financial Service Center: (718) 935-5000**. As of June 2016, these vendors are **Advantage Travel, at (888) 444-4240 and Euro Lloyd Travel, at (212) 629-5470**.

These vendors are obligated to provide the most economical fares. Before booking transport by any means, the traveler must contact a contracted travel agent and use the vendor's services. If the agency cannot accommodate, the traveler must provide a detailed statement as part of the TRAC application to document why the vendor was unable to arrange transportation.

Once transportation and lodging have been arranged and pre-approved the traveler must submit a request to travel in TRAC. Upon approval of the request, DOE offices and schools are required to initiate a PO in FAMIS for payment of air/rail and lodging costs. The PO must be approved by the approving authority.

Upon approval of the PO by the approving authority, the traveler must forward all required supporting documentation (for example, travel itinerary, conference agenda, copy of the PO and TRAC request) to the Central Business Finance Office (CBFO). Once these materials are received, the PO will receive final approval.

3.7 Frequent Flyer Miles

In accordance with the NYC Conflicts of Interest Board's ruling (Advisory Opinion 2006-5), DOE travelers may accumulate and use for personal benefit the travel frequent flyer miles they earned while traveling on official DOE business. However, travelers may not select a desired airline in order to receive or increase frequent flyer benefits if the fare will result in additional expense to the DOE.

3.8 Expenses To and From Transportation Terminal

Travelers will be reimbursed the actual costs for taxi or public transportation between residence/work site and transportation terminals or for personal car mileage in accordance with their collective bargaining unit. The DOE will determine if costs are reasonable and necessary.

3.9 Unused Tickets

If a trip is cancelled with just cause, a credit for future travel will be issued to the DOE by the travel vendor. Documentation may need to be provided. This credit should be used for travel within the same fiscal year to avoid accounting concerns.

3.10 Sundry Charges

3.10.1 Baggage Fees

Reasonable checked baggage fees imposed by airlines are reimbursable.

3.10.2 Personal Expenses

Personal expenses, such as laundry, valet service, movie rentals, theater or cruises, entertainment, and transportation to and from eating establishments are not reimbursable. Social activities such as sightseeing and golf outings are considered personal expenses and will not be reimbursed.

3.10.3 Tipping and Gratuities

Customary and reasonable tips and gratuities (not to exceed 18% of cost less taxes if applicable) for transportation services and at lodging establishments (e.g., bell services) are reimbursable expenses. The cost of tips for meal service is incorporated into the per diem and other meal rates provided in this SOP and are reimbursable as long as they do not exceed the [GSA](#) rate.

3.10.4 Telephone Calls

Only travelers approved for international travel may be reimbursed for up to two personal calls of reasonable duration (10 minutes of charge time) for each day of travel.

3.10.5 Miscellaneous Services

The cost of fax, express mail, photocopying, postage, wireless access or other incidental office business services to support a DOE business purpose is reimbursable. Travelers must document the date, time and purpose and provide receipts. These expenses must be entered into the "Other" field within the TRAC application.

3.11 Vehicles

3.11.1 When Vehicles May Be Used

It may be impossible or impractical to use public transportation to carry out a traveler's professional obligations. The **approving authority** will make the determination on a case-by-case basis whether a DOE-owned vehicle, privately-owned vehicle, rental car, car service or taxi may be used. All receipts related to the use of non-public transportation (e.g., parking, tolls) must be electronically transferred to the approving authority receiving the [TRAC](#) form.

3.11.2 DOE-Owned Vehicles

The Division of School Facilities (DSF) oversees the purchase and maintenance of the DOE's vehicles and reports on their use. Use of a vehicle within the DOE fleet is governed by the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). All drivers of DOE vehicles must adhere to regulations set forth in the [City Vehicle Driver Handbook](#), and comply with all relevant rules and regulations set forth by the DOE. DSF's Office of Fleet Management may be contacted by telephone at (718) 349-5634 (available Monday – Friday 7 am – 4 pm) or email: Rbundick@schools.nyc.gov.

3.11.3 Privately Owned Vehicle

General Guidelines for using Privately-Owned Vehicles

The request to use a personal vehicle must be to perform official DOE job related functions only. The minimum criteria for requesting the use of a personal vehicle are:

- It may be impossible or impractical to use public transportation to carry out an employee's professional obligations.
- An employee must work extensive hours outside his/her normal business hours.
- An employee's primary responsibility includes extensive field work.
- An employee's work assignment requires him/her to be readily available to travel from home or assignment on a twenty-four (24) hour basis.
- The employee must carry equipment or supplies to various locations to perform his/her work.

All employees that meet one or more of the above criteria traveling on official DOE business regardless of destination, title or position must request and secure prior approval for the use of their personal vehicle by completing the *Request for Use of a Personal Vehicle* within [TRAC](#). Travelers must comply with DOE rules and regulations as detailed in this and any other SOP document.

The *Request for Use of a Personal Vehicle* form within TRAC requires the traveler to identify the following:

- The vehicle(s) identification number (VIN), make, model, year, color, and plate number
- State of registration
- Certification that the traveler's license has not been suspended
- Certification that the driver does not have any pending violations (e.g., DWI, DWU AND DWAI)
- Certification that the vehicle inspection and car insurance are current
- Certification that the traveler is the registered owner or has been authorized by the registered owner to operate the vehicle and use it to conduct DOE business
- Vehicle inspection is current on the vehicle to be used for official DOE business
- Maintain a daily log indicating the mileage and points of departure and destination

Expenses Related to the Use of Privately-Owned Vehicles

The mileage allowance for the approved use of a private vehicle is \$0.28 per mile (since mileage rates may change, memoranda citing current figures will be issued periodically). This rate is established by the New York City Office of the Comptroller and is stated in its guidelines entitled [Directive 6: Travel, Meals, Lodging and Miscellaneous Agency Expenses](#). Costs incurred for gasoline, motor oil and fluids, accessories, repairs, depreciation, towing and other similar items will not be reimbursed inasmuch as those costs are factored into the mileage allowance.

Parking charges are reimbursable under the following circumstances:

- The expense was reasonable, necessary, and related to official DOE business.
- Suitable free parking was not available.

- A parking receipt is submitted unless a coin meter was used. Muni meter receipts are acceptable proof of payment.

Tolls will be reimbursed accordingly:

If the traveler's private E-Z Pass was used, a copy of the statement with the appropriate toll transaction(s) circled or highlighted must be forwarded with the TRAC form to the CBFO.

- If the traveler does not have or use E-Z Pass, the traveler must request a receipt and forward it to the CBFO as part of the supporting documentation.

Accidents While Using a Privately-Owned Vehicle

The traveler must do the following in the event of an accident while operating a privately-owned vehicle used on official DOE business:

- Report accident to police;
- Report accident to his/her insurance company;
- Immediately notify his/her supervisor;
- Provide reports from police and insurance company to immediate supervisor (in the event of a lawsuit);and
- Comply with all applicable laws of the jurisdiction within which the accident occurred, as well as all applicable laws of the jurisdiction that issued the traveler's driver's license.

Traffic Violation/Summons While Using a Privately-Owned Vehicle

Traffic violations and summonses (e.g., parking ticket, motor vehicle violation) incurred during the conduct of DOE business are **never reimbursable**. This is true regardless of whether the violation/summon was issued during the operation of a personal vehicle or DOE vehicle for local, long distance or overnight travel.

3.12 Taxi and Car Service General Guidelines

- When other more economical means of transportation are unavailable, impractical or inappropriate, travelers may use a taxi or car service.
- All requests for reimbursement of taxi and car service expenses should be made in the TRAC application. Receipts for tolls must be sent to the processing office.
- Reasonable fares and customary tipping will be allowed.
- DOE P-cards cannot be used for taxis, cabs, or car service

3.13 Rental Cars

General Guidelines

When other more economical means of transportation are unavailable, impractical or inappropriate, travelers may use a rental vehicle to travel to or from a long distance or overnight travel destination, or for

general purposes, after arrival by other means, at a long distance or overnight travel destination. Although the use of rental vehicles may be necessary for local travel in rare circumstances, vehicle rentals are generally not permitted for transportation within the five boroughs of New York City. All requests for reimbursement for the cost of a rental car must be made in TRAC. Receipts for parking and tolls must be sent to the processing office.

Bidding is required if the anticipated total cost for a car rental will be in excess of \$250. Bidding guidelines and thresholds outlined in the [OTPS Chapter](#) of our standard operating procedures manual must be followed.

Reimbursable costs include the rental fee of a compact car for up to two (2) DOE travelers traveling together or a midsize vehicle for three (3) or more DOE travelers traveling together, rental agency imposed mileage fees, gasoline charges, parking expenses, and tolls.

Insurance Regulations for Rental Cars

In the rare instance of approval given to rent a car, the staff member is required to use his/her credit card which likely includes vehicle insurance, (which would subsequently be reimbursed for their out-of-town expenditures via TRAC).

DOE P cards **cannot** be used for vehicle rentals. Merchant codes on P cards have been disabled for vehicle rental firms.

Accidents While Using a Rental Vehicle

The traveler must do the following in the event of an accident while operating a rental car on official DOE business:

- Immediately notify the local police
- Immediately notify the rental car agency and provide it with a copy of the police report
- Immediately notify his/her insurance company (if applicable) and provide it with a copy of the police accident report
- Immediately notify his/her supervisor and provide him/her with a copy of the police accident report
- Comply with all applicable laws of the jurisdiction within which the accident occurred, as well as all applicable laws of the jurisdiction that issued the traveler's driver's license.

Chapter 4: Out-of-Town Overnight Travel

Overnight travel may be necessary in connection with official business. When authorizing overnight travel for training, education and professional conferences or other official DOE business, the approving authority must ensure that the traveler's TRAC request describes how this travel provides a specific educational or other benefit that cannot be gained in any other manner or within NYC or other local travel destination. Also, the approving authority must consider the consequences of not having the traveler at the school or office, and the expense of the trip must be weighed carefully against the benefits to be derived from the travel.

4.1 Out-of-Town Overnight Transportation

In all out-of-town travel situations, the most economical and practical means of transportation must be selected. Additional factors, including the number of people traveling, luggage and materials to be transported, meeting schedules, traveler health, safety and the cost of traveler time and the impact on the traveler's ability to efficiently conduct official business upon arrival, should be considered.

When transportation transfers to conference events are included as part of conference registration, reimbursement for other types of transportation will not be provided unless justified and documented.

4.2 Overnight Lodging

To receive an allowance or reimbursement for lodging, the trip must be over a 75 mile radius from the center of the City (determined to be: 59th Street and Columbus Circle) and/or you will be unable to return home by 11:00 pm.

Payment for out-of-town overnight lodging is permitted if the following conditions are met:

- The out-of-town travel results in, or would result in, a work day of more than 11.5 hours from departure from home to return home; or
- Starting time of activity is so early that starting the trip from home or work location to arrive on time would require a traveler to leave more than 2 hours earlier than customary; or
- The business of the conference or meeting extends into or begins in the evening, and the traveler will be unable to return home or to his/her work location by 11 p.m.; or
- The conference, seminar or convention requires on-site preparation the day before the conference by the person attending; or
- It is imprudent to require the traveler to return to their home due to an unforeseeable situation.

If lodging is provided by another agency or organization, this should be indicated on the TRAC, and the traveler may claim just the [GSA](#) rate for meal allowance(s) (refer to section 4.3). The DOE is a tax-exempt institution and as such, will not reimburse travelers or pay for the portion of lodging costs that represent New York State taxes. For lodging within New York State, travelers must use the State's tax exempt certificate to prove exemption.

If the lodging rate exceeds the maximum rate per day specified in the [GSA](#) guidelines, the attendee/traveler will be prompted in TRAC to provide justification and obtain prior approval from the

Executive Director, Division of Financial Operations (DFO) who is the Chancellor’s designee for approving thresholds above GSA rates. The approving authority may authorize permission under the following circumstances:

- There is no other available low-cost lodging in the vicinity of the conference site
- There are other professional and/or cost-saving benefits by staying at the conference site
- If this results in reduced transportation and/or meal costs for the traveler

Travelers who spend less than the [GSA](#) rate will be reimbursed only for actual lodging expenditures. Traveler(s) must provide lodging receipts to the processing office.

Conference registration, workshop and/or relevant activity charges are reimbursable, provided such fees are itemized in the conference registration literature. Costs for nonessential, personal or social activities unrelated to official business are not reimbursable.

4.3 Out-of-Town Meals

The overnight traveler is entitled to the [GSA per diem meal rate](#), which includes taxes and tips. Meal allowances for destinations within the United States vary according to the travel destination, and consist of individual breakfast, lunch and dinner components. Meal reimbursement may not exceed any of the components individually or collectively. Receipts are required for meals and all other expenditure items.

When travelers travel less than a full day, partial meal reimbursement will be made in accordance with the GSA’s breakfast, lunch and dinner components [subject to criteria below](#).

Payment for breakfast, lunch and/or dinner will be allowed when overnight travel requires **leaving home** or the primary work station before the following hours:

Breakfast:	7:00 A.M.
Lunch:	11:00 A.M.
Dinner:	6:00 P.M.

Payment for breakfast, lunch and/or dinner will be allowed when the overnight travel requires **arrival at home** or the primary work station after the following hours:

Breakfast:	8:00 A.M.
Lunch:	2:00 P.M.
Dinner:	7:00 P.M.

Where the registration fee includes one or more meals, the per diem allowance must be reduced accordingly.

4.4 Travel Outside the United States for DOE Personnel (International Trips)

This section does **NOT** include procedures regarding international trips for students. Those procedures are detailed in [Chancellor's Regulation A-670](#).

All rules and regulations regarding out of town trips (overnight trips) as detailed in this chapter must be followed for international trips as well.

4.5 Approvals for International Trips

In addition to the Level 1 and 2 approvals indicated in the table below, all International trips require final approval from the DOE Chief Operating Officer or his/her designee.

Type of Personnel	Level 1 Approval	Level 2 Approval	Level 3 Approval
School Based Personnel other than the Principal (3-Level Process)	Principal	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOE Chief Operating Officer (or designee) • Chancellor’s Designee
School Principal (3-Level Process)	Field Support Center (FSC)	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOE Chief Operating Officer (or designee) • Chancellor’s Designee
Other Personnel not at a School Site (2-Level Process)	Not Applicable	Executive Director or Site Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOE Chief Operating Officer (or designee) • Chancellor’s Designee

Requests for international trips are filed via TRAC just like any other trip. Once the TRAC is approved by the first level approving authority, it will be automatically emailed to the second and/or third level. All travelers and approving officials will be notified regarding the disposition of the TRAC request.

4.5.1 Travel outside the continental United States is reimbursed based on the per diem rate allowance established by the [U.S. Department of State](#).

Employees must have pre-approval from their direct supervisor before registering and booking flight and hotel for a conference outside of NYC. In addition, they must have permission of **the DOE Chief Operating Officer** before registering at or travelling to international conferences; **all requests should be submitted in writing through the traveler’s Leadership Team Member.**

4.5.2 If a claim is made for expenses paid in foreign currency, documentation showing the amount in American dollars (e.g., credit card bill) for such expenses must be provided.

4.5.3 Expenses directly related to lodging and meals are included in the per diem allowance. Incidental expenses unique to foreign travel for which reimbursement can be sought are:

- Visa fees
- Passport fees
- Cost to convert currency
- Travelers' checks charges

- Departure taxes
- Required immunizations and inoculations not paid for by insurance

Chapter 5: DOE-Sponsored Meetings, Conferences, and Retreats

This section provides guidelines for facility costs, lodging and the provision of food at meetings, conferences or retreats where official DOE business is conducted. DOE staff responsible for arranging and authorizing reimbursement for such events must be cognizant of the potential for abuse in this area and must closely monitor the appropriateness of such expenditures.

Upon receiving approval from an approving authority for conducting a DOE sponsored meeting, conference or retreat, the persons responsible for making and approving the arrangements must abide by the following guidelines in order to have the vendor invoice(s) for the costs associated with the event, submitted by the sponsoring DOE division, office, school or otherwise, be processed for payment.

5.1 NEW: [Object Codes](#) for Meetings, Conferences, and Retreats:

Local Business Meeting & Related Expenditures –Object Code 451 Updates

451F -Food items

451S –Space and facility rentals

451T -Transportation service to and from the meeting as described above, which exceed the normal commute cost to the primary work site.

451A –All other activities

Local Workshop/Conference Expenditures –Object Code 452 Updates

452F -Food items

452S –Space and facility rentals

452T -Transportation service to and from the event as described above, which exceed the normal commute cost to the primary work site.

452A-All other activities

5.2 At the Worksite - When Light Fare can be considered

Provision of food at DOE internal meetings should **not** be a routine practice.

Light refreshments for up to \$3 per person and modest fare for up to \$5 for breakfast (inclusive of beverage) or up to \$10 for lunch (inclusive of beverage) per person is appropriate **only** under the following two circumstances:

- At a meeting lasting more than four hours held at the organizer’s worksite and attended by multiple schools/offices away from their worksites; or
- At a meeting starting at least two hours prior to the beginning of the regular workday/school starting time or continuing at least two hours beyond the end of the regular workday/school time provided that attendee does not get paid overtime or receive a meal allowance.

Requirements for the provision of refreshments or light fare:

- Pre-approval by Executive Director or head of office
- Agenda showing begin and end time of meeting, specific agenda items related to office/education/policy priority
- Sign in sheet listing attendees
- Receipt from food vendor with applicable date(s)

Note: all planning and expenditures for light refreshments or modest fare must be preapproved by the Approving Authority.

If light refreshments or modest meals are appropriate and expenses will exceed \$250, all applicable bidding rules must be followed. For guidance, review the [OTPS Purchases standard operating procedures manual](#).

5.3 Outside of Worksite - Without Overnight Lodging

To minimize meeting expenditures, DOE should make every effort to schedule business meetings within the five boroughs of New York City, at City offices, and during customary business hours. Approval for meetings outside of DOE facilities must be obtained in writing prior to the event by the meeting organizer's superintendent or Executive Director. At minimum, approval should be requested 10 business days prior to the event.

Additionally, when creating a PO relating to meeting expenses, the creator of the document must provide justification as to why the meeting was held at a location other than a DOE facility.

5.3.1 Meeting Facility

A suitable free or low cost DOE contracted facility (DOE, other government or not-for-profit organization site) should be used for DOE-sponsored meetings and activities as approved per above.

- If a DOE contracted facility is unavailable, a non-contracted facility may be obtained in accordance with bidding guidelines and thresholds as stated in the "Other Than Personal Services" [\(OTPS\) Purchases" standard operating procedures manual](#). All such events and arrangements must be pre-approved in writing by the meeting organizer's superintendent or executive director at least ten days prior to the meeting.

Note: Please refer to this link for further information from Division of Contracts and Purchasing website: [Guidelines for Choosing NON-DOE venues for DOE events](#).

NOTE: When a facility rental fee is greater than \$15000; unit head; Principal; Superintendent and/or Executive Director MUST obtain approval from the Chief Operating Officer before proceeding to encumber a Purchase Order and/or signing any binding agreements.

5.3.2 Refreshments

DOE payment or reimbursement for refreshments or light fare at meetings should not be a routine business practice.

Communal meals among City employees consumed outside the office and not at a meeting or conference, must not be paid from City funds under any circumstances.

5.3.3 Food Vendors

The provision of refreshments or light fare must be pre-approved by Division or Unit head and the procurement of food from a vendor must be in accordance with the thresholds identified in this document along with bidding procedures outlined in the [OTPS Purchases document of DFO's standard operating procedures manual](#).

5.3.4 Donation for Meeting Space, Meals and Other Expenses

In accordance with the New York City Conflicts of Interest Laws and Rules, for all donations solicited by the DOE, of any value, the solicitation must contain an explicit statement that a decision to donate, or not donate will have no impact on any official action and will have no impact on access to government officials. Contact the DOE Ethics Officer for further guidance at 212-374-3438.

It is recommended that the same explicit statement be included in all acknowledgements for all donations of any value, received by the NYC DOE.

All donations must be consistent with applicable Conflict of Interest rules.

5.4 Maximum Food Allowances per Person for DOE Sponsored Meetings, Conferences, or Retreats for Total Food Expenses below \$250 Total:

These allowances include tips, and delivery charges. Receipts, agendas and attendance sheets are required for documentation.

Category	Maximum Per Person Allowance
Light Refreshments or Beverages	\$3.00
Breakfast (inclusive of beverage)	\$5.00
Lunch (inclusive of beverage)	\$10.00

- Any costs incurred for alcoholic beverages are NOT to be paid using DOE funds under any circumstances.
- The person(s) responsible for scheduling and approving DOE-sponsored events should make every effort to limit the length of meetings in order not to incur light fare or refreshment expenditures.

5.5 Maximum Food Allowances per Person for DOE Sponsored Meetings, Conferences, or Retreats for Total Food Expenses Greater Than \$250 Total

For larger events, maximum reimbursement rates for food are the GSA rates and bidding rules must be followed. Please check the [GSA](#) site to ensure that you fall within the current allowable meal rates. However, follow bidding rules outlined in the [OTPS Purchases standard operating procedures manual](#).

5.6 Meetings Outside of DOE Worksite - With Overnight Lodging

Approval must be obtained in writing from the [approving authority](#) before scheduling a DOE-sponsored event that involves overnight lodging.

When authorizing overnight travel for training, education and professional conferences or other official DOE business, the approving authority must ensure that the traveler's TRAC describes how this travel provides a specific educational or other benefit that cannot be gained in any other manner or within NYC or other local travel destination. Also, the approving authority must consider the consequences of not having the traveler at the school or office, and the expense of the trip must be weighed carefully against the benefits to be derived from the travel.

- The facility in which the overnight DOE-sponsored event is held must be procured in accordance with SOP bidding guidelines outlined in the SOP on "[OTPS Purchases](#)."
- The maximum daily per diem rate for any DOE-sponsored event that includes the cost of overnight accommodations, food, use of meeting/conference rooms and any related facilities, services such as fax, computer, telephones, copying privileges and any other incidental expenses, is \$250.00.
- DOE-sponsored events requiring overnight accommodations may involve various categories of expenditures, some of which have specific maximum allowances set by this SOP. Note that the GSA establishes maximum rates for overnight lodging, exclusive of applicable taxes, by state, county, and/or city. Persons responsible for scheduling and approving these events should consider the total cost for booking a site as it is possible that a lower total cost may be achieved even where the maximum allowance within a particular expenditure category is exceeded. Under those circumstances, the site with the lower total cost should be selected. A written statement explaining the reasons for exceeding any specific maximum allowance must be made part of the records supporting expenditures for the event.

5.7 Meeting Materials

Any meeting materials being presented to non-DOE personnel at a DOE-sponsored event, conference, or retreat must receive approval from Executive Director and/or the designated head of the unit and/or office.

Chapter 6: Externally Sponsored Meetings, Conferences, and Retreats

6.1 Expenditures

To be reimbursable, all expenditures must meet the criteria set forth in this SOP and the [OTPS SOP](#). Expenditures should be charged to the below object codes.

6.1.1 NEW: [Object Codes](#) for Meetings, Conferences, and Retreats:

Local Business Meeting & Related Expenditures – Object Code 451 Updates

451F -Food items

451S –Space and facility rentals

451T -Transportation service to and from the meeting as described above, which exceed the normal commute cost to the primary work site.

451A –All other activities (For out-of-pocket reimbursement such as registration fee)

Local Workshop/Conference Expenditures – Object Code 452 Updates

452F -Food items

452S –Space and facility rentals

452T -Transportation service to and from the event as described above, which exceed the normal commute cost to the primary work site.

452A-All other activities (For out-of-pocket reimbursement such as registration fee)

6.1.2 Costs Paid by Non-Governmental Entities

Any expenditures incurred at externally sponsored meetings, conferences, and retreats **must** conform to all rules set forth in applicable City, State and Federal rules, including the New York City Conflicts of Interest Laws and Rules, as well as Chancellor Regulation C-110 and in Chapter 7 of this document.

6.2 Attendance

If greater than 3 participants from one Office/Division plan to attend an external retreat, meeting, or conference, the Leadership member must have DOE Chief Operating Officer (or designee) approval to attend.

6.3 Meeting Materials

Any meeting materials being presented should always be reviewed by presenter with Executive Director and/or designated head of office.

Chapter 7: Conflicts of Interest

7.1 Travel Expenses Paid for by Non-Government Entities

Employees may be invited by non-government entities, including private and/or not-for profit organizations, to attend a meeting, conference or seminar at the non-government entity's expense. In essence, such entities are offering to pay an employee's travel, meal and/or lodging expenses. This applies even if the non-government entity is not the organization that is sponsoring the meeting, conference or seminar. Under appropriate circumstances, where the Ethics Officer determines that the acceptance of travel expenses is permitted under applicable Conflict of Interest rules, payment of expenses may be accepted as a "gift to the DOE" provided that:

- The trip is for a DOE purpose and could be paid for with DOE funds. That decision must be made by the approving authority .
- The employee must travel economy class and stay within GSA lodging rates. If a meeting, conference or seminar is being held in a hotel, the employee may stay in the hotel, with proper approvals, and exceed GSA.
- Meals may be accepted if they are part of a meeting, conference or seminar. However, meals in restaurants separate from the meeting, conference or seminar site may not be accepted.
- Educational tours which are part of a conference may be accepted, but cruises, golf outings or similar activities are not acceptable.
- The trip is no longer than necessary to accomplish the DOE purpose; in essence, the non-government entity cannot pay for additional days of travel.

7.2 Ethics Officer Review

- DOE employees traveling on official business, paid for by private or not-for-profit entities, must complete a Travel Related Expenses Paid for by Non-Governmental Entities form. This form must be approved by the traveler's executive director, superintendent or head of office (as applicable) (approving authority) and the DOE ethics officer prior to traveling. Whenever possible, proper approval should be obtained 30 days prior to travel.
- Once the Travel Related Expenses Paid for by Non-Governmental Entities form is approved by the ethics officer, the traveler must complete a TRAC application prior to traveling.
- Inquiries regarding anything contained in this section should be addressed to: Office of Ethics and Conflicts of Interest. Telephone: 212-374-3438; Fax: 212-374- 5596.

7.3 DOE Meetings Sponsored by Non-Government Entities

- This section applies to DOE-meetings attended by DOE personnel that are sponsored by Non-Governmental entities. The sponsor may offer to pay for expenses such as facilities, and/or meal costs related to official DOE meetings or conferences.
- Prior to accepting sponsorship, approval must be obtained in writing from the traveler's superintendent or executive director.
- DOE offices may accept payment of these expenses by non-government entities provided that:
 - Acceptance of expenses must be done consistent with applicable Conflicts of Interest rules. See also Section 5.3.4 on solicitation of donations.
 - If the DOE meeting has an overnight stay, the procedures in Sections 7.1 and 7.2 apply,
 - For daytime events where overnight lodging is not required, the per diem rates established by the GSA are not exceeded unless otherwise approved by the traveler's superintendent or executive director.
 - Non-governmental entities paying for expenses may not make sales or other presentations at the DOE conference or meeting. This limitation does not apply if the non-government entity is providing training for equipment, software or instructional materials previously purchased or donated to the DOE. The limitation further does not apply to publishers of New York State Textbook Law (NYSTL) - approved materials.

7.4 Record Maintenance

- Once the ethics officer has approved the Travel Related Expenses Paid for by Non-Governmental Entities form, the traveler's office or school must forward a copy of the completed form to the non-government entity. This action is intended to inform the non-government entity that the acceptance of payment for the traveler's facility/lodging/meal expenses will not give it any special advantage in their present or future business dealings with the DOE.
- It is required that the office accepting payment of expenses maintain documentation that includes the approving authority's approval, the number of DOE personnel that attended the activity, the date(s) and location of the activity, the per person cost(s) and a copy of the writing referred to in the bullet immediately above.