

DC DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

REIMBURSEMENT GUIDE

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Reimbursable Expenses

Travel expenses must be approved and eligible in order to be reimbursable. Employees should ensure that all travel expenses are economical and within the approved limits. Any travel that exceeds the set amount will not be reimbursable and the employee shall be required to cover those costs. Reimbursable travel expenses include transportation, lodging, meals, incidentals, and some miscellaneous costs.

Transportation

Reimbursable transportation expenses include airfare, ground transportation, government, rental and personal vehicles.

Air

- Agencies may use a purchase card to pay for airline tickets in advance.
- If an employee needs to purchase tickets on their own, they must choose the lowest priced coach class ticket. Only the lowest price coach class ticket is reimbursable, unless another class of service is authorized.
- Employees are responsible for paying extra fees if they choose to fly business or first class.

Ground

- Includes Amtrak, MARC, Virginia Railway Express, Metro, Uber, Lyft, taxis and shuttles.
- Employees may use ground transportation to travel to and from their destination, between places while on official travel, and to obtain meals.

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- Employees are encouraged to use courtesy transportation whenever possible, and to always choose the least expensive mode of transportation.
- Tips for ground transportation should never exceed 20% or \$2.00 for courtesy transportation in order to be reimbursable.

Rail

- Amtrak tickets may be purchased ahead of time by the agency on the purchase card.
- If an employee must purchase rail tickets, they must choose the lowest coach class ticket for the expense to be reimbursable.

Government Vehicle

- Employees are encouraged to use government vehicles whenever possible for travel within 100 miles of the District of Columbia.
- Employees must refuel vehicles prior to returning them.
- Employees shall be reimbursed for costs associated with parking and tolls.

Rental Cars

- Employees should always choose the least expensive vehicle. Exceptions are permitted to accommodate a special need of an employee, if additional room is required to transport multiple employees authorized to travel together, if an employee is required to transport a large amount of District government materials, or in cases of severe weather for safety reasons.
- Employees should always refuel the vehicle before returning it to the vendor.
- Employees will be reimbursed for tolls, fuel, and parking when using rental cars.

Personal Vehicle

- Employees may use their own vehicles if approved by the agency and if a government or rental vehicle is not reasonable under the circumstances.
- Parking and tolls are reimbursable at the actual rate and must be accompanied by a receipt regardless of amount.
- Mileage is reimbursable, calculated based on distance between approved departure and arrival locations, multiplied by the [GSA mileage rate](#).
 - Mileage incurred from using a personal vehicle to travel to another approved mode of transportation (e.g., driving to the airport, train station, etc.) is reimbursable.

Lodging

- Reimbursable when an employee is traveling on an approved trip for more than 12 hours.
- Must arrange trip to minimize number of lodging nights needed.
- Must choose the hotel with the lowest available rate when travelling. To determine this rate employees should take into consideration their transportation needs and any inclusions such as parking and meals.
- Employees may request a waiver to stay at a more expensive hotel if:
 - a) The hotel at the higher rate will reduce transportation costs;

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- b) The hotel selected is at the conference or training location and does not exceed 125% of the lowest available rate, and would allow the employee to obtain the full benefits of the conference/training; or
- c) The waiver is necessary to ensure personal safety, acceptable quality, or both.
- Lodging waivers are not permitted for preference or convenience and may only be given at the discretion of the agency head.
- The lodging rate shall not exceed 150% of the GSA per diem rate without approval of the City Administrator.
- An employee will be reimbursed for the single occupancy rate unless the employee shares the room with another government employee, in which case the employee will be reimbursed for ½ the rate of the double occupancy.
- Employees are permitted to stay with friends or relatives when travelling and may be reimbursed a flat "token" amount if the employee is able to substantiate the costs levied to the host for using their accommodations.
- Upgrade requests for lodging are at the employee's expense and not reimbursable.

Meals and Incidental Expenses

- Reimbursable when an employee is on an approved trip for more than 12 hours.
- May be reimbursed on a per diem basis or on an actual expense method and limited to 150% of the applicable maximum meal and incidental expense per diem rate when choosing the actual expense method.
- Reimbursable meals may only include the following items:
 - One (non-alcoholic) beverage;
 - One appetizer;
 - One main course;
 - Tax and tip.
- Alcoholic beverages, desserts or any other extras, are not reimbursable.
- When an employee travels for more than 12 hours but less than 24 hours, the employee's allowable per diem rate for meals and incidentals is 75% of the applicable daily meal rate.
- When travel exceeds 24 hours or more, employees may follow the rate chart below:

Day of Travel	Allowable Meals and Incidental Expense Rates
Day of departure	75%
Full days of travel	100%
Last day of travel	75%

- When an employee's meals and incidental expenses are reimbursed on a per diem basis, and those expenses are covered by registration or activity fees, the per diem rate will be reduced to the following:
 - For a furnished dinner: 50%;
 - For a furnished lunch: 24%; and

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- For a furnished breakfast: 16%.
- Employees may be eligible to receive the full daily meal and incidental expense rate even if they are furnished as a part of the registration or activity fees if:
 - The employee is unable to consume the furnished meal due to medical or dietary restrictions or religious beliefs.
 - The employee made a reasonable effort to make alternative meal arrangements but was unable to do so;
 - The employee purchased a substitute meal to satisfy their medical or dietary restrictions or religious beliefs; or
 - The employee was unable to consume the furnished meal due to work related time constraints.

Miscellaneous Expenses

- Employees who are on travel for more than 12 hours are eligible to receive reimbursement for miscellaneous expenses. Those expenses include the following:
 - Baggage expenses (the first checked bag is reimbursable, the second and subsequent bags are only reimbursable if deemed necessary and reasonable);
 - The use of computers, internet, and other office needs while on-site at the hotel;
 - Business related telephone calls when an employee has not been issued a mobile phone (calls must be itemized with who was called and the purpose);
 - Faxes and costs associated to send or receive faxes;
 - Lodging taxes on the actual amount of the lodging costs or the maximum allowed by the agency only if the employee can show they did not fail to ask for the government exempt rate; and
 - Laundry and clothes-cleaning expenses when an employee is authorized for travel for more than 4 days.

Special Needs Travel Expenses

- Employees with special needs may be reimbursed for any additional travel expenses that may be required such as:
 - The services of an attendant to accommodate special needs;
 - Transportation, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses incurred by the attendant;
 - Upgrades beyond coach class to accommodate special needs;
 - Specialized services provided by a common carrier to accommodate special needs;
 - Specialized transportation to, from, and at the travel destination;
 - Costs for baggage handling when those costs are due to special needs;
 - Renting and/or transporting of a wheelchair; and
 - Any other expense deemed necessary by the agency to accommodate an employee with special needs.

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Local Travel

- Reimbursable local travel is limited to ground transportation and does not include lodging or meals.
- If an agency authorizes reimbursable expenses for local travel, the employee must travel by bus or subway unless:
 - The travel destination is not reasonably accessible by bus or subway, in which case an agency may authorize travel by car;
 - The travel time by bus or subway is significantly greater than by car, and the agency determines that transportation by car is advantageous to the District government;
 - Travel by government vehicle is available and the expected cost of parking is equal to or less than the expected cost of travel by bus or subway; or
 - The employee wishes to travel using their personal vehicle, no government vehicle is available, and the use of a personal vehicle is allowable in accordance with District policies and regulations.
- Under special circumstances for those employees who may have a disability or medical condition, an agency head may request DCHR to authorize reimbursement for lodging and meals associated with local travel.

International Travel

- International travel requests must follow the process outlined in Mayor's Memorandum 2017-001, dated May 2, 2017.
- Employees who do not directly report to the Executive Office of the Mayor must first submit International Travel Request Forms to the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) for review at least 45 business days before the proposed travel.
- No employee may commit District funds for nonrefundable international travel without the approval of the Mayor's Chief of Staff.
- If the employee's agency is paying for the international travel, the employee shall adhere to the applicable international per diem rates established by the U.S. Department of State. Reimbursement of expenses shall be done in accordance with § 4003 of Title 6-B, Chapter 40 of the DCMR, and policies and procedures set forth in Mayor's Memorandum 2017-001, dated May 2, 2017.

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Non-reimbursable Expenses

The District provides reimbursement of reasonable expenses related to travel. Neither preference nor convenience outweighs economy. Therefore, there are certain expenses the District does not reimburse.

Transportation and Tips

If an employee travels by a method of transportation different from the approved mode of travel, the employee will be responsible for any additional expenses incurred that exceed the cost of the authorized transportation type or per diem rate. For example, if courtesy transportation services are not readily available, employees should use the mode of ground transportation that is the least expensive mode of transportation, taking into consideration employee safety, cost, and efficiency. Tips over 20% for a taxi, shuttle, ride share service, or tips more than \$2 for a courtesy shuttle will not be reimbursed.

Personal Convenience and Upgrades

If, for personal convenience, an employee travels by a route or class of transportation, including seating and rental vehicles, that will exceed the approved cost of travel, the employee will be responsible for those additional costs. If an employee travels to an approved destination earlier than the date and time authorized for official travel or leaves the travel destination later than the date and time authorized for official travel (such as by extending the employee's stay at the travel destination for the purposes of a personal vacation), the employee will be responsible for costs that exceed the approved cost of travel.

Miscellaneous

The District does not provide reimbursement for personal phone calls, entertainment, alcohol, or other personal expenses.

Disputes

Employees are required to provide proper documentation for travel and training expense reimbursement. Agencies may deny submitted requests that are not properly completed or are without certain documents. To request reconsideration of a denied reimbursement, employees must:

- File a new travel expense reimbursement form for the disallowed item(s);
- Provide full itemization of the disallowed item(s);
- Provide receipts or other documentation for each disallowed item that requires a receipt or other documentation*;
- Provide a copy of the notice of disallowance; and
- State the proper authority for the claim if challenging the agency's application of a law or regulation.

Employees are allowed to dispute a reimbursement denial by filing a [grievance](#).

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** Employees are not required to provide a receipt or other documentation if the receipt or other documentation was filed with a prior travel expense reimbursement form (in which case the employee must indicate on the form that the receipt or other documentation was previously filed with the agency).*
