

Soledad  
Unified  
School  
District -  
Travel and  
Conference  
Policy -  
January  
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&  
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The purpose of this document is to provide all stakeholders of the Soledad Unified School District (“District”) a clear understanding of its policies and procedures as it relates to travel and conferences (inter and intra state), use of credit cards, and to establish effective control over travel and conference expenses.

The Business  
Department

# SOLEDAD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Travel & Conference Policy for 2018

### Declaration

This document is prepared by using the recommended guidelines of the United States, General Service Administration (GSA), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

### Initial Process:

The following process must be followed whenever a District employee is planning to attend a conference, workshop, or meeting:

1. Individuals planning to attend a conference must meet with their immediate supervisor to discuss the reasons for attending and for approval.
2. A Request for Participation Form must be completed by each individual that is planning to attend an event such as conference, and must be signed by the immediate supervisor.
3. Submit the Request for Participation Form and a copy of the conference agenda, flyer, or event notice to the Business Department for review and processing.
4. A Purchase Order (PO) is required when arranging for travel to verify budget and encumbrance of necessary funds.
5. Out-Of-State travel requires prior approval from the District's Board of Trustees.
6. International travel is not allowed.

### Federal Lodging, Meal, and Mileage Rates

The District is adopting travel and lodging guidelines in conjunction with the United States General Service Administration (GSA) in order to ensure that travel and conference expenses stay within reasonable limits.

GSA publishes rates for lodging and meals that federal officers and employees cannot exceed. These rates vary by state and region (i.e., New York City hotel and meal rates are higher than those in California). Most major hotel chains set aside rooms at the federal rate. To obtain the applicable federal rates, District employees should ask for the "government rate" when making hotel reservations. By adopting federal lodging and meal rates as the general maximum amounts allowable, the District Board of Trustees ("Board") can minimize the possibility of travel expense abuse.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) establishes reimbursement rates for miles traveled by employees while using their personal vehicles for business reasons. The District's Board Policy requires using this rate in establishing the mileage allowance rate when using personal vehicles for District business. **For calendar year 2018, the IRS standard mileage rate is ¢54.5 (cents) per mile.** All preapproved mileage reimbursement must be submitted by using the District's official Reimbursement Form found on the District's website under Business Department.

### Reimbursable Expenses

Employees who incur travel expenses while conducting official District business may be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses. **The Maximum amount allowed for the following travel expenses are:**

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- Parking fees - not to exceed: \$25.00 per vehicle/per day. The District will not reimburse valet parking fees.
- Bridge/Toll Roads – not to exceed: \$10.00 per vehicle/per day.
- Car Rental – not to exceed \$60.00 per day. Please refer to “Car Rental” section for more details.
- Hotel – not to exceed \$302.00 per night. Please refer to “Lodging” section for more details.
- Airfare – please refer to “Travel” section under “Flying” for more details.
- Fares for Taxicab services – the District will only cover the cost of service between: 1) to and from the airport and your hotel and, 2) to and from the hotel to the work location or conference.
- Fuel (only when using District vehicles and must provide an original receipt, signed and dated)
- Mileage – when applicable, the mileage rate is ¢54.5 (cents) per mile.

Reimbursement of travel expenses shall be based on actual expenses as documented by original and itemized receipts. All receipts must be signed and dated by the person responsible for the charges, and shall be submitted to the Business Department within 72 hours of trip return. All reimbursement claims must be accompanied by the approved “Conference Request Form,” flyer or agenda for the conference attended, and all itemized and original receipts.

The District will **NOT** reimburse any employee for any of the following expenses:

- Alcoholic Drinks
- Entertainment
- Dry Cleaning or Laundry Services
- Room Service Expenses
- Expenses of any family member
- Personal losses
- Traffic violation fees
- Parking violation fees
- Valet parking
- Any type of shipping/receiving services
- Computer rental fees
- Any type of gift
- Any type of upgrade like upgrading a car rental, hotel room, or airfare accommodation
- Limousine service
- Incidental expenses like tips to porters, baggage carriers, and hotel staff.

### **District Credit Card**

Only Cabinet Level Officials such as the Superintendent, Chief Business Official, Associate or Assistant Superintendent who have received ethics and conflict of interest training are authorized cardholders. When travel and conference arrangements for District employees need to be made, a CalCard credit card needs to be used to make the necessary reservations. To use a CalCard, the employee attending the conference needs to complete a “Credit Card Request Form” that is signed and approved by his/her immediate supervisor. Then, submit it to the Business Department for processing along with a copy of the approved “Conference Request Form” and the flyer or agenda for the event or conference subject to attending.

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**Please Note:** The use of a CalCard is for reservation purposes only. The employee attending the conference must ensure that a requisition is submitted on time to the business department to obtain a purchase order and request a check to pay for the actual hotel reservation. Typically, hotels want checks (payment) to be mailed at least two weeks in advance to ensure clearance of funds. It is imperative for any employee requesting to use a CalCard to make reservations that they do so with plenty of time to ensure reservations are paid for in advance.

For any late reservations, employees are allowed to use their own personal credit cards to book hotels or pay for airfare tickets and seek reimbursement upon returning from their trip. In these cases, applicable reimbursement rates apply and are subject to this policy. It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure he/she understands what can or cannot be reimbursed. Original and itemized receipts are required for any reimbursement claim. Any claim submitted with missing information or receipts will not be processed.

### **Transportation Guidelines**

If traveling to a conference, workshop, or meeting at a location exceeding 200 aerial miles in distance, flying should be considered whenever possible and practical as the best mode of travel.

**District vehicles**, when available, should be used by individuals or group of people attending conferences, seminars, trainings, or meetings to a location that is less than 200 aerial miles. District vehicles are available by calling the Maintenance, Operations, and Transportation Department at (831) 678-2180. If District vehicles are not available, employees may use their own personal vehicles and may be reimbursed for mileage. To calculate mileage, individuals need to submit a MapQuest copy measuring the distance between the school or department to the conference/meeting destination – to and from.

**Flying:** Flight arrangements should be made with as much time as necessary to receive the best rate possible. Individuals have the option of using their own credit cards to make airfare reservations, or they can request to use the Business Department American Express by completing the following forms:

- Complete a Credit Card Request Form from the Business Department.
- Submit a copy of the approved Conference Request Form.
- Submit a copy of the conference agenda, flyer, or invitation describing the event.

**Car Rental:** Car rental should only occur when other means of transportation more economical (e.g. shuttle services, bus, subway, or taxi) are not available. When car rental is necessary, within the continental U.S., individuals are allowed to rent a car to help them reach their final destination. Maximum car rental allowance including local and state tax, as well as comprehensive car insurance, is \$60.00 per day.

Individuals have the option of using their own credit cards to make car rental reservations, or they can request to use the Business Department American Express by completing the following forms:

- Complete a Credit Card Request Form from the Business Department.

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- Submit a copy of the approved Conference Request Form.
- Submit a copy of the conference agenda, flyer, or invitation describing the event.

### Hotel Reservation Guidelines

Individuals should make every effort to schedule meetings so that overnight accommodations are not needed. Hotel reservations should only be made when individuals attend conferences, meetings, or workshops outside the County that end after 6:00 pm, and when the distance between the conference location to the school site exceeds 100 aerial miles making it difficult for employees to return the same day.

Individuals have the option of using their own credit cards to make hotel reservations, or they can request to use the Business Department CalCard by completing the following forms:

- Credit Card Request Form
- Submit a copy of the approved Conference Request Form.
- Submit a copy of the conference agenda, flyer, or invitation describing the event.

The District updates its lodging rates according to the rates provided by the U.S. General Service Administration. The maximum lodging (excluding taxes) rates are: **\$302.00 per night**. When seeking reimbursement, individuals are required to obtain the itemized lodging receipt when checking out and submit to the Business Department upon return.

In the event that a hotel does not accept purchase orders or payments by check, the District will pay for the hotel room using a District credit card. In this case, a fully itemized receipt from the hotel will be required to submit to the Business department upon trip return.

### Mileage Reimbursement Process

Reimbursement will be from the work location to the destination. The mileage reimbursement rate is periodically adjusted based on IRS guidelines. Use the MapQuest™ website to determine the mileage and attach a copy to your reimbursement claim form. For parking or toll road fees reimbursements – the District requires original, Itemized, signed and dated receipts.

### Meals

The Superintendent and/or the Chief Business Officer (CBO) may be reimbursed for meal expenditures that include board members if authorized District business is conducted. In such cases, original and itemized receipts must be retained and submitted to the Business Department immediately upon returning from their trip. The authorized allowance for meals will be paid provided the travel time meets the following requirements:

- Breakfast will be paid for travel that commences at or before 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 am
- Lunch will be reimbursed if travel requires between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Dinner will be reimbursed for travel that ends after 6:00 p.m.

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### **Meal Allowance:**

The maximum meal allowances for calendar year 2018 are as follows:

- Breakfast \$17.00
- Lunch \$ 18.00
- Dinner \$34.00

**Please note:** these rates represent the maximum amount of money that the District will reimburse each employee for each conference or travel occasion. All reimbursement claims for meals must be accompanied by original and itemized receipts.

The District will only reimburse employees for meals based on the amount stated in the original receipts submitted. If the amount stated in the original receipt exceeds the maximum amount allowed under this policy, the District will only reimburse the employee what is allowed for meal allowance, per day. For example, if an employee submits an original receipt for dinner and the amount is greater than what this policy allows, the District will only reimburse up to \$34.00 dollars, per occasion. No reimbursement claim for meals will be processed without the submission of original receipts that are signed and dated by the individual.

If the attending conference provides a meal, the employee cannot be reimbursed for the meal because it was already paid for as part of the registration fee.

### **Final Process:**

The following process must be followed whenever a District employee returns from a conference that required any or all of the following business expenses: airfare, lodging, car rental, and any other authorized business expense.

Immediately upon returning from your travel:

- Complete a District approved Claim for Reimbursement Form. These forms can be found online at the District's website under Business Department.
- Submit a copy of the approved Conference Request Form.
- Submit a copy of the conference agenda, flyer, or any type of documentation that confirms attendance.
- Submit original receipts, signed and dated. No receipts, no reimbursement.
  - Fee for lodging, receipt is required and attached to the claim. When checking out, please obtain final receipt from hotel front desk.
  - Fee for seminar or workshop registration, all receipts are required and attached to the claim form.
  - Any other applicable fees, as described herein, original receipts are required.
- Payment of claims – please allow 30 days for processing and issuance of payment.