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## **TRAVEL POLICY**

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### **I. PURPOSE**

To establish criteria and approval authority for reimbursement of travel and meal expenses for Mendocino County Employees Retirement Association (MCERA) employees (including the Executive Director), service providers and Trustees.

### **II. POLICY**

MCERA administrative budget funds shall be spent to pay actual and necessary travel expenses of employees, service providers and Trustees only in accordance with this policy. In the event expenses incurred exceed those listed in this policy, reimbursement will be limited to the items and amounts specified within this policy. No reimbursement for travel shall be paid from MCERA administrative budget funds for employees, service providers and Trustees except as authorized by this policy, and in conformance with the adopted budget. This policy shall be subordinate to any other provisions of law pertaining to travel. This policy applies to any travel claim, notwithstanding the source of funding.

MCERA employees, service providers and Trustees will obtain prior approval from the Executive Director for reimbursements under this policy. Upon approval by the Executive Director, employees, service providers and Trustees will be reimbursed for expenses incurred in accordance with this policy.

#### **A. TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT CRITERIA**

1. Conditions under which expenses may be paid.
  - a. Travel and meal expenses may be paid only when they are incurred for the purposes of conducting official MCERA business, representing MCERA in an official capacity, or obtaining training or information directly beneficial to MCERA operations.

- b. The actual cost of travel should be reasonable, utilizing the least expensive methods available as determined by the Executive Director, given the particular circumstances involved in each trip.
  - c. By the Executive Director approving travel and meal reimbursement, it is assumed that the travel expenses incurred are considered reasonable and necessary.
2. Expenses that can be paid or reimbursed.

a. Transportation expenses.

Actual and necessary transportation expenses consist of the most efficient, economical mode and class of transportation reasonably consistent with scheduling needs, based on a determination by the Executive Director. Government or group rates shall be used when available. Personal vehicle mileage costs will be reimbursed upon approval of the Executive Director based on Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued standard mileage reimbursement rates.

b. Lodging expenses.

Actual and necessary lodging expenses will be paid or reimbursed when travel on official MCERA business reasonably requires an overnight stay. If such lodging is in connection with a conference, lodging expenses must not exceed the group rate published by the conference sponsor for the meeting if such rates are available at the time of booking. If the group rate is not available or for expenses not associated with a conference, government rates must be requested and paid when available. Lodging rates that are equal to or less than government rates are assumed to be reasonable and reimbursable for purposes of this policy. By the Executive Director approving the lodging reimbursement, it is assumed that the lodging expenses incurred are considered reasonable and necessary.

c. Meal expenses.

Meal (breakfast, lunch and dinner) expenses, including gratuities, may be reimbursed based on the U.S. General Services Administration ([www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)) Daily Per Diem rates when traveling on official MCERA business outside the geographical boundaries of Mendocino County. A meal expense is not necessary and will not be paid or reimbursed

by MCERA if that meal is included, for no additional charge, as part of a conference or mode of travel (e.g. airline inflight meals).

Expenses for alcoholic beverages will not be paid or reimbursed by MCERA.

d. Miscellaneous expenses.

Actual tolls, ground transportation, parking expenses, baggage fees, communications (internet, fax, telephone, postage and copying/printing), and laundry costs for lengthy trips may be paid or reimbursed if considered reasonable and necessary and approved by the Executive Director. Only self-parking expenses necessary for the claimant's vehicle will be paid. Valet parking will not be paid if there is an alternative.

Personal travel club memberships, ticket vouchers or discount program fees will not be paid or reimbursed by MCERA, and MCERA will not reimburse fees waived as a result of such membership. In order for miscellaneous expenses to be reimbursed, they must be actually incurred by the traveler.

- e. Expenses for days prior to or after a conference or meeting will be reimbursed only if determined by the Executive Director to be reasonably and necessarily compelled by the conference or meeting schedule and travel exigencies or if the extension results in overall trip costs that are the same as or lower than overall trip costs without the extension.
- f. Other actual and necessary expenses not listed in this policy may be paid for or reimbursed if considered reasonable and necessary and approved by the Executive Director.

3. Travel reimbursement claim form content and submission requirements.

All expense reimbursement requests must be submitted on a travel reimbursement claim form (travel claim). Travel claims must identify how the expenses relate to the conduct of MCERA business and document that the expense in question met the requirements of this policy. Travel claims must be submitted within 60 days of the completion of travel and must be accompanied by receipts documenting travel and lodging expenses.

## **B. ADDITIONAL MEAL REIMBURSEMENT CRITERIA FOR IN-COUNTY MEALS AND DRINKS**

1. Reimbursement for meal expenses of MCERA employees, service providers and Trustees while conducting business within the County.

With Executive Director approval, MCERA employees, service providers and Trustees shall be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred while promoting the interests of MCERA within their particular areas of responsibility. Such expenses may include costs for persons who are not MCERA employees but who are involved in official MCERA business.

Claims for such expenses shall include itemized receipts supporting the reimbursement requested. In these cases, additional documentation must be provided with the request for payment as noted below under additional documentation related to in-county purchases of food or drinks. By signing off as claimant on the request for reimbursement, the official is swearing to the facts justifying the expense under the provisions of this policy.

When multiple meals are claimed for a single day, the total amount reimbursed must fall within the U.S. General Service Administration ([www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)) Daily Per Diem rate for Mendocino County.

2. Reimbursement for meals for meetings of the Retirement Board, employee workgroup or events.

With Executive Director approval, meals purchased by the department for staff, trainers, speakers, and subject matter experts required to attend trainings, meetings and events which result in staff and/or Trustees working during mealtime, may be paid or reimbursed by MCERA. When staff is working outside normal work hours, and it is more practical to provide meals than to have staff leave and return, meals may be paid or reimbursed by MCERA. Scheduling meetings during mealtimes should be based upon business necessity and only in circumstances where the best interests of MCERA and its members are served by doing so. Additional documentation must be provided with the request for payment as noted below under additional documentation related to in-county purchases of food or drinks.

3. Meals during emergency situations.

With Executive Director approval, MCERA may provide employees with food or drinks when employees are required to work before, during and after normal meal periods due to emergencies, provided the amounts claimed are within the limitations of this policy.

In these cases, a written explanation must be provided detailing the emergency situation, and additional documentation must be provided as noted below under additional documentation related to in-county purchases of food or drinks.

4. Additional documentation related to in-county purchases of food or drinks.

Every attempt should be made to provide as much documentation as possible when in-county food or drinks are purchased for employees or others. At a minimum, a written explanation must be provided detailing the business purpose and the names of the individuals for which these items were provided. By the Executive Director approving the claim for reimbursement, it is assumed that the expenses incurred are considered reasonable and necessary.

## **C. OUT OF STATE TRAVEL CRITERIA**

Out-of-state travel that is not included in the MCERA budget must be approved by the Board prior to the travel. Upon approval by the Board, out-of-state travel shall be treated in accordance with this policy.

## **D. TRAVEL BUDGET**

The Board shall set an appropriation within the annual budget for MCERA employees, service providers and Trustees education/travel use. The annual fiscal year budget shall be adopted at a public meeting each year. The Executive Director is responsible for developing and managing education and travel expense programs consistent with the best interests of MCERA and for justifying the annual budgetary requests. A schedule of conferences, meetings and seminars will be developed and maintained to assist in the planning and budgeting of travel for the Board and staff. Anyone who attends a seminar, on-site visitation or conference should be prepared to report on the content and the continuing value for future attendance by other Board or staff members.

### **III. REVIEW**

The Board shall review this policy at least every three years to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate.

### **IV. HISTORY**

The Board adopted this policy on January 16, 2019.

The Board reviewed this policy on June 15, 2022.

The Board reviewed this policy on June 18, 2025.