

STATE BAR OF TEXAS
Business Expense Reimbursement Policies
and Procedures

Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Adopted: May 29, 2020

The enclosed internal policy, "State Bar of Texas Business Expense Reimbursement Policies and Procedures," is adopted pursuant to Section 3.07.01 of the State Bar Board Policy Manual (see below). To the extent this internal policy conflicts with a provision of the State Bar Board Policy Manual, the provision of the Board Policy Manual takes precedence.

3.07 Reimbursement of Expenses

3.07.01 General.

A. Policies and Procedures. Prior to June 1 of each year, the Executive Director shall prepare State Bar business expense reimbursement policies and procedures for the upcoming Fiscal Year, and shall submit such policies and procedures to the Board Audit and Finance Committee for approval.

B. Applicability. Subject to the provisions of this Policy Manual, the expense reimbursement policies and procedures shall apply to travel and other business-related expenses incurred by State Bar staff, Board members, standing committee members, special committee members, task force members, other entities funded by the State Bar, and State Bar volunteers acting on behalf of and at the direction of the Bar.

The following policies apply to State Bar Staff, Board Members, TYLA Board Members, Committee Members, Task Force Members, and Commission For Lawyer Discipline Members and Other Volunteers. This policy can be used as a guide for other State Bar-related entities.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

****All expense reimbursement requests must be submitted no more than 45 days after an event and must be accompanied by sufficient substantiation of the expenses, pursuant to Section 3.07 of Board Policy.****

Expense reimbursements, including substantiation, may be subject to the Public Information Act.

This policy covers reimbursements for expenses incurred by cash, personal credit card, and State Bar corporate credit card, or direct bill expenses charged to the State Bar.

Teleconferencing and Videoconferencing Consideration: For each State Bar meeting, careful consideration should be given as to whether business could be handled remotely through teleconference or videoconference, without travel by all or some of the participants. Whenever possible, remote meetings are strongly preferred over in-person meetings. The State Bar has technology that will facilitate presentations to participants through videoconferencing. For further information on this service, please contact your staff liaison or travel coordinator.

Event Accommodation Preference: If the State Bar provides meals and lodging at an event, expense reimbursements submitted in lieu of the meals and lodging provided at the event will be limited to the cost of lodging provided. Meals will not be reimbursed. If special needs or circumstances exist, separate meals and/or lodging may be necessary, but are subject to State Bar approval by staff liaison or travel coordinator prior to incurring the expense.

Expenditures for Non-State Bar travelers: Expenses for spouses, companions, relatives, or friends will not be reimbursed except as provided in the State Bar Board Policy Manual.

Early Arrival and Late Departure for Non-State Bar Business: Occasionally, a State Bar traveler may wish to arrive early for a meeting or event or stay over after a meeting for non-State Bar-related purposes. The State Bar will not reimburse expenses incurred as a result of such early arrival and/or late departure.

Travel Arrangements should be made as far in advance of the event or meeting as possible in order to take advantage of available special fares or rates. Absent substantiated special circumstances, reimbursement for expenses occurred for last-minute travel arrangements might not fully be reimbursed.

Discounted Rates: The State Bar member benefits program offers discounted rates on car rentals and hotels. The State Bar publishes discount programs for car rentals and hotels in the *Texas Bar Journal* and on the State Bar website at texasbar.com/discounts.

Budgetary Restrictions: Certain departments and programs impose additional limitations on expense reimbursements. Please check with your staff liaison or travel coordinator for further information.

Expense Reimbursement Form Required: The State Bar Expense Reimbursement Form is available upon request. The form is required to be completed and submitted to the State Bar. The staff contact and address are printed on the form. Reimbursement forms should be emailed, faxed, or mailed to the appropriate liaison C/O, PO Box 12487, Austin, TX 78711.

Signature Required. The Expense Reimbursement Form must be signed by the person for which the

reimbursement request is being made. An electronic signature is acceptable. The form must be completely filled out to prevent delay in processing the request.

Receipts Required. The reimbursement request must include itemized receipts for expenditures and must include all information described below, depending on the expense. Receipts should be submitted neatly, with small receipts taped to a letter-sized paper. Tips and miscellaneous expenses for which no bill or receipt is provided are reimbursable without receipt, and should be documented on the reimbursement form. On occasion, a traveler may lose a receipt. The traveler should list the expense incurred, including the name of the vendor, total amount incurred, the date incurred, and a statement that no alcohol was purchased. Excessive loss of receipts may result in a denial of reimbursement.

Payment Processing: Please allow two to three weeks from receipt by State Bar personnel to process the reimbursement and issue a check for payment. Reimbursement checks will be mailed to address on the form for non-State Bar employees. Employees can pick up reimbursement checks with the Cashier. Electronic payment may be issued upon request and completion of the required forms.

Questions? Please see the second page of the travel reimbursement form for staff contact information.

Modifications to Reimbursement: The State Bar retains the right to modify an expense reimbursement request to bring the request into compliance with this policy. The State Bar will provide the traveler with an explanation for modifications to the submitted reimbursement request.

TRANSPORTATION

The State Bar will reimburse the following expenses incurred when traveling on State Bar business:

Commercial airline travel will be reimbursed at the least expensive rate available for travel. Fully-reimbursable flights are as follows:

Southwest Airlines: "Wanna Get Away" fares are strongly preferred and should be booked for every Southwest Airlines flight unless otherwise unavailable. Early bird check in fees on Southwest are reimbursable.

Other Airlines: Economy or Economy Plus fares (whichever is less) will be reimbursed.

Timely Booking: To receive a low fare on airline travel, the traveler should book flights well in advance of the departure date, such as 30 days in advance. Depending on the circumstances, the State Bar may reduce reimbursements for premium, first class flights or for flights booked less than two weeks of departure date.

Special Circumstances: Under certain circumstances, a premium, or urgent flight may be necessary. Notification and prior authorization is required from appropriate State Bar staff to ensure full reimbursement. If the traveler anticipates a high likelihood of flight transfer or cancellation, the traveler may be reimbursed for the cost of the least expensive fully-refundable ticket.

Cancellation Fees: The State Bar will not reimburse for the cost of flight cancellation or transfer fees, unless the transfer or cancellation was due to a change in the State Bar schedule of events, illness, or other special circumstances. If a flight that has been paid for by the State Bar is cancelled, rebooked, or rescheduled and a credit is given to the traveler, the credit must be used for future State Bar business purposes.

Bus transportation. The use of bus services such as Vonlane or Greyhound is reimbursable.

Taxi or rideshares are reimbursable. The use of taxis, airport bus, or rideshare services is encouraged for short trips or distances because they are typically more cost effective than car rentals.

Car rental expenses and related fuel charges will be reimbursed by the State Bar. Car rentals should be limited to economy, standard, or intermediate cars when possible. On certain occasions, volunteers or employees may require a larger, high-grade rental car when sharing rides or carrying equipment. Only the volunteer or employee renting the car is eligible for reimbursement. Travelers should refuel the car prior to returning the car to avoid additional fees.

Discounted Rates: Discounted car rentals should be used when possible. Elected and appointed officials (including directors) and employees should use the State of Texas travel program for car rentals. Please contact your travel coordinator or staff liaison for the rate details and procedures. The discounted program should only be used for travel for official State Bar business. The discounted rates are with Hertz, Avis, and Enterprise.

Personal Vehicle Mileage will be reimbursed at the current reimbursement rate set by board policy. For the current calendar year, mileage will be reimbursed at \$0.575 per mile. The reimbursement rate for calendar year 2021 will be updated in January. Travelers who use their personal vehicles to travel may claim mileage from their place of departure, such as their home or office, to the destination. Support for the mileage, such as driving directions showing estimated mileage for the trip, may be requested. Fuel expense will not be reimbursed when claiming mileage.

Private Aircraft – Additional Passengers: A member who owns or leases a private aircraft is entitled to reimbursement up to the amount that would have been paid or reimbursed to each passenger had the passenger(s) incurred the reimbursable cost of coach airfare.

Parking and Tolls: Parking and toll expenses are reimbursable. Fines, such as parking tickets or towing fees from parking illegally are not reimbursable.

MEALS

Actual reasonable expenses for meals incurred while traveling on State Bar business will be reimbursed. Meal expenses must be accompanied by detailed receipts listing all items purchased. The receipt copy showing only the total cost of the meal and the tip will not be sufficient detail to substantiate a meal expense. The names of all reimbursable guests must be indicated on the receipt.

Alcohol Expenses will not be reimbursed.

Meals provided with the meeting: If a meal is provided with the meeting or event, the transportation to and from the meal and the cost of a meal at another location is not reimbursable.

Meals prior and post meeting: Meals incurred while traveling directly to and from an event are reimbursable.

LODGING

The State Bar will reimburse lodging expenses at reasonable, single occupancy or standard business room rates when traveling on State Bar business. When the hotel is at a conference or convention site with a special conference rate, reimbursement or corporate credit card approval will be limited to the conference rate.

Length of stay: To the extent possible, meetings should be scheduled so that attendees can arrive for the meeting and leave the same day. The State Bar will only reimburse hotel stays when necessary. Hotel stays must be approved in advance by State Bar staff, unless otherwise notified.

Cancellation Fees: The State Bar will not reimburse for the cost of lodging cancellation fees unless special circumstances are demonstrated. Cancellation fees incurred on direct bill reservations will be the responsibility of the individual. Cancellation fees can typically be avoided if notification is provided within three days of the reservation date.

Tips: Tips are reimbursable without receipt, but should be itemized.

Discounted Rate: Discounted hotel stays are available through the State Bar of Texas member benefits program.

OTHER EXPENSES

Other reasonable and necessary expenses of conducting State Bar business may be reimbursed, including such items as copying, postage, and long-distance telephone calls. Prior to incurring charges for printing and copying jobs costing more than minimal expense, please contact your staff liaison for alternative options. When possible, printing and copying jobs should be completed in advance of the meeting for maximum savings to the State Bar. The cost of Wi-Fi in hotel guest rooms will be reimbursed, if Wi-Fi is necessary to conduct State Bar business.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES APPLICABLE TO STATE BAR STAFF

Staff members may be reimbursed for *reasonable and necessary* expenses while conducting State Bar business.

The State Bar expects employees to act responsibly and professionally when incurring and submitting requests for expense reimbursements related to travel or any type of general business performed on behalf of the State Bar.

Submission: To receive reimbursement for expenses pursuant to this policy, staff members must submit a substantiated reimbursement request on the Reimbursement Form. The approved form should be presented to the State Bar's Accounting Department no later than 15 business days after the staff member returns to the office after State Bar business-related travel.

Use of Personal Vehicle: The State Bar does not pay for travel to and from the office. Employees who use their personal vehicles to travel for State Bar business may claim mileage from their home or office to the destination, if the destination is outside the city in which that employee's place of work is located. If the employee is traveling from home to another location that is within the same city as the employee's place of work, such as an airport, only the mileage that exceeds the distance between the employee's place of work and home will be reimbursed.

Use of a Rented Vehicle: The State Bar traveler should use a rental service that is accommodating while providing the least expensive fare overall. Employees not using the State's contracted rate, which includes insurance coverage, must decline insurance coverage offered by the car rental company (the State Bar's own coverage will apply). Before travel, please obtain a copy of the State Bar's automobile insurance identification card for use in renting a vehicle. This information can be obtained from the Office of Legal Counsel.

Travel Advances: Travel advances are authorized for specific situations that might cause undue financial hardship for staff traveling on State Bar business. A request for a travel advance must be approved in writing by a division director, department director, or a staff member specifically authorized to approve such a request.

A request for a travel advance should be made at least one week before funds are needed. A copy of the "Travel Advance Form" is included with this policy as Attachment A.

Within 5 business days of returning to work after a business trip for which a travel advance is requested, a staff member must complete a "Substantiation of Travel Advance Expenditures" form (see Attachment B) and return it to the Accounting Department. This deadline can only be extended in writing by the Finance Division Director.

If the staff member is returning a portion of the travel advance funds, the form and money should be given to the Accounting Department's Cashier.

If the State Bar owes the staff member additional monies because the travel advance did not cover all expenses related to the business trip, the completed "Substantiation of Travel Advance Expenses" form should be given to the Accounting Department's Accounts Payable Manager.

Corporate Credit Card: Items listed on a staff member's monthly corporate credit card statement must be substantiated by detailed receipts. The account coding for the expenses shown on the statement should be recorded on a form prescribed by the State Bar's Accounting Department. (See Attachment C). A corporate credit card is not to be used for personal charges. Prior to payment by the State Bar, a staff member's corporate credit card statement must be reviewed and all charges approved by authorized personnel.

The State Bar will not be responsible for payment of fees assessed due to the late payment of a corporate credit card statement unless such late payment is the fault of the State Bar.

Staff members required to travel on a regular basis are eligible to apply for a State Bar corporate credit card. If it is determined that a staff member is regularly requesting reimbursement for State Bar-related purchases charged to a personal credit card, the staff member may be requested to obtain a State Bar corporate credit card. A division director must approve the request for a State Bar corporate credit card. The forms to make application for the card may be obtained from the office of the Finance Division Director.

Out of State Staff Travel: No staff member may register for, travel to, or attend any out-of-state meeting or event at State Bar expense that is not a State Bar-sponsored event without pre-approval, obtained by:

(1) Completing a "Request for Authorization for Out of State Travel and Estimated Financial Impact Statement" (See Attachment D) which shall include:

- a. the location of the meeting or event;
- b. the full identity of the organization sponsoring the meeting or event;
- c. the nature of the meeting or event to be attended;
- d. a statement as to how the staff member's attendance at the out of state meeting or event would benefit the State Bar;
- e. the number of days during which attendance will be necessitated, which shall include the date of commencement and date of termination of the meeting;
- f. the reason for requested attendance at the meeting or event; and
- g. the estimated full amount of air travel round trip, the full amount of lodging during the meeting or event, the amount of registration fee, anticipated meal expenses and anticipated miscellaneous expense; and

(2) Obtaining the prior authorization and approval of the Executive Director **before** registering for the event or meeting.

Denial of Reimbursement Request: The State Bar of Texas reserves the right to deny reimbursement of any travel-related expense, or payment of any staff credit card statement, on the basis of failure to comply with the aforementioned policies and procedures. Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary actions.

Approver Responsibility: A staff member who is authorized to review and approve another staff member's expense reimbursement or credit card statement is required to withhold approval for payment if there is reason to believe that the expenses are inappropriate, or unauthorized. The responsible division director should be notified of all instances of inappropriate, or unauthorized expenses. The approver is responsible for ensuring the travel expense is appropriately supported and complies with this policy.