



**Runge Independent School District**  
Finance & Operations

# **TRAVEL POLICY & PROCEDURE GUIDELINES**

## **TRAVEL GUIDELINES OVERVIEW**

Employees authorized to travel for business and educational purposes on behalf of the District shall be reimbursed for all usual and customary travel-related expenses made in connection with District business according to District rates and state law. The policies and process established herein have been developed on the premise that employees will use good judgment and prudence in expanding District funds when traveling. Each District employee who is authorized to travel assumes a direct responsibility to limit travel expense claims to those actually incurred on travel that is clearly for the purpose of discharging official business of the District. Planning of day-to-day travel should take into consideration the most economical means of accomplishing the authorized task. Administrators who are responsible for approving travel plans have the additional responsibility of limiting travel plans to those trips that are clearly in accordance with the District policy.

**SCHOOL BOARD POLICY DEE(LOCAL) STATES:** An employee shall be reimbursed for reasonable, allowable expenses incurred in carrying out District business only with the prior approval of the employee's supervisor and in accordance with administrative regulations. For any allowable expense incurred, the employee shall submit a statement, with receipts to the extent feasible, documenting actual expenses.

### **FEDERAL GUIDELINES (EDGAR)**

All travel expenses paid with federal grant funds shall meet the new EDGAR requirements (200.474) such as:

1. All travel costs must be reasonable and necessary;
2. All travel costs must be consistent with the District's travel policy;
3. All travel costs must be directly related to the grant award;
4. All travel costs must meet the obligation of expenses rules.

In addition, all federally-funded travel expenses must meet the TEA's Current Travel & Mileage Reimbursement Rates (as published in the most recent TEA Correspondence).

### **FEDERAL GUIDELINES (IRS)**

All travel expenses shall be paid under an Accountable Plan:

1. Travel must have a business connection;
2. Travel Shall account for all expenses;
3. Excess travel advances, if any, shall be reimbursed to the District;
4. Meal expenses shall be in conjunction with overnight stay only.

The meal expenses for the day of departure and return shall be adjusted based on the time of departure and return as noted in the District travel guidelines.

Travel advances involving student travel will not be provided to a traveler more than 30 days prior to the travel event.

If any travel expenses fail to meet the accountable plan guidelines, the payment to (or on behalf of) the traveler shall be taxed through the normal payroll cycle.

**NOTE: Travel expenses incurred due to the fault of a traveler, except for extenuating circumstances, such as late registration, canceled flight, etc. are not considered to be reasonable or necessary; therefore, all such expenses shall be paid by the traveler.**

#### **LOCAL DISTRICT GUIDELINES EMPLOYEE**

All employees are required to get advance approval for travel at least two (2) weeks prior to the travel event (meeting, conference, workshop, athletic event, etc). All travel must be **pre-approved** by the employee's principal or supervisor **prior to submission** to the Finance Office before any travel expenses are incurred.

All anticipated travel costs shall be encumbered to the appropriate budget account code(s) before any travel-related costs are incurred by the District or traveler. This applies to all travel expenses regardless of funding source for in-state and out-of-state travel.

Employee reimbursements must be submitted within 30 business days after completion of travel. The employee reimbursement will be denied if any discrepancies and/or unsupported or unreasonable costs are identified. If the employee is unable to support or substantiate any such costs, then reimbursement for such costs will not be allowed.

Credit Cards and all original, itemized receipts associated with the card, shall be returned to the Finance Office within three (3) business days after completion of travel to ensure prompt payment to the vendor. If a receipt is not received from the purchaser, the purchaser may be held liable for reimbursement of the entire purchase.

In accordance with the [State Comptroller's TexTravel Guidelines](#), the District acknowledges that discount or reward programs such as flights, hotels, etc., are not things of value belonging to the District. The administrative burden to track the individual reward programs of employees would be administratively impractical and thus the District has determined that the employee may retain the value, if any, that they receive personally due to school business-related travel.

**IMPORTANT: The District's fiscal year ends August 31 of each year. All travel reimbursements must be submitted prior to the fiscal year-end. If travel is conducted on August 31, reimbursement must be submitted on the first workday after the trip. Once the fiscal year has been closed, reimbursement will NOT be paid.**

## **LOCAL DISTRICT GUIDELINES STUDENT**

All RISD student travel is to be in compliance with District Policies. No student may travel to represent Runge ISD unless accompanied by a Runge ISD employee.

The District will utilize the Citi Card for all expenses related to student travel (meals, hotel, parking fuel, etc.)

Prior to travel, the campus/department will enter a requisition to the Citi Card. The request should be entered for the total number of students at the current allowance for student meals. A current roster or list of students must be attached to the PO to support the number of meal requests.

The Finance Office will check out the Citi Card to the staff member traveling with students. The staff member must secure all original, itemized receipts at time of purchase and turn receipts into the Finance Office within three (3) business days of completed travel to ensure prompt payment to the vendor.

Students may not be transported in a personal vehicle under any circumstances.

Snacks, gum, candy, energy drinks, etc. shall not be allowable costs with District funds.

## **DISTRICT NON-ALLOWABLE TRAVEL EXPENSES**

The following travel expenses are not reimbursable:

- Alcoholic drinks or beverages
- First-class airfare, EarlyBird check-in, priority boarding, or more than 1 checked bag fee
- Snacks, drinks, gum, candy, etc.
- Hotel movie rentals, room service, room upgrades, or expenses charged to the hotel room
- Fee-based hotel amenities such as gyms, spas, etc.
- Expenses for spouses or other non-District employees (includes transportation, meals, lodging, etc.)
- Expenses due to the traveler's failure to cancel a registration or travel arrangements (except for extenuating circumstances)
- Hotel Internet charges, unless the expense is work-related and pre-approved
- Valet parking, unless approved prior to travel
- Tours or other entertainment while on business travel
- Travel expenses incurred by an employee who subsequently resigns (over the summer or other break), unless there are extenuating circumstances

## **DISTRICT ALLOWABLE TRAVEL EXPENSES**

### **EMPLOYEE MEALS**

When the traveler returns from the trip, they must complete a Travel Expense Reimbursement Form and give it to their campus/department secretary once completed. The secretary will then submit a check request for the traveler's meal reimbursement. The employee reimbursement will be denied if any discrepancies and/or unsupported or unreasonable costs are identified. If the employee is unable to support or substantiate any such costs, then reimbursement for such costs will not be allowed.

If a meal is provided in the conference registration or by the hotel, that meal will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Runge ISD does not pay for any meals for day trips. A day trip is defined as a trip that does not require an overnight stay.

In-State Travel - Employee meals are paid on per diem rates established by the District not to exceed \$40 per day. If eligible for the entire \$40 per diem for an overnight trip, it may be used in different amounts for each meal; amounts greater than \$40 per day will not be reimbursed. Meals for overnight travel are paid on the following bases:

Breakfast \$10 (must leave the District before 7:00 am or return to the District after 8:00 am)  
Lunch \$12 (must leave the District before 11:00 am or return to the District after 1:00 pm)  
Dinner is \$18 (must leave the District before 5:00 pm or return to the District after 6:00 pm)

Out-of-State Travel - Reimbursement will be made per meal based on the [US General Services Administration](#) per diem rate.

### **STUDENT MEALS**

Attach a list of students or current roster to support the number of meals requested for co-curricular or extra-curricular events, if applicable. Itemized receipts are required for ALL meals and must be submitted within three (3) business days after the travel event.

Overnight travel is not required for students in order to obtain meals.

Teachers and sponsors accompanying students are eligible for per diem meal amounts.

Tips or gratuities for student meals shall be allowed only with local funds, not to exceed 15% of the meal expense, and shall fall within the per diem allowance. Tips or gratuities are not allowed with Federal funds.

Student meals are paid on per diem rates established by the District not to exceed \$40 per day for students. If eligible for the entire \$40 per diem for a full day of travel or an overnight trip, it may be used in different amounts for each meal; amounts greater than \$40 per day will not be reimbursed. Meals are paid on the following basis:

Breakfast \$10 (must leave the District before 7:00 am or return to the District after 8:00 am)  
Lunch \$12 (must leave the District before 11:00 am or return to the District after 1:00 pm)  
Dinner is \$18 (must leave the District before 5:00 pm or return to the District after 6:00 pm)

## **LODGING**

Overnight stay is acceptable when traveling 60 miles or more from the employee's home campus/department. This means the location of the event, not the location of the hotel. The employee's supervisor must approve any exceptions to this guideline in writing prior to the trip. No lodging shall be allowable in the traveler's home city at a commercial lodging establishment.

Lodging shall be at the actual rate not to exceed the maximum amount in District regulations, currently set at \$150 per night. If the lodging rate exceeds \$150, the employee's supervisor must approve any exceptions to this guideline in writing prior to the trip.

When at least two (2) District employees are traveling to the same event, they are **required** to share a room and each receives up to the maximum lodging rate. Written approval from the superintendent is required prior to travel if the employees do not share a room.

The maximum nights of lodging shall be based on the start and end times of the travel event and the distance of the travel location. Lodging costs that exceed the required minimum shall not be deemed necessary or allowable travel costs.

A conference or event hotel shall be the first priority to minimize transportation costs at the event city. If rooms at the conference/convention negotiated rate are no longer available, and the traveler decides to stay at the conference/convention hotel at the hotel's standard rate, the traveler will only be reimbursed at the conference/convention negotiated rate.

Lodging costs shall be paid with a district-issued credit card on site at the time of arrival and/or departure based on the hotel's charging policy. Travelers shall not pay the hotel expense with personal funds and seek reimbursement after-the-fact unless some of the travel costs are for personal travel days. Under this scenario, the traveler must ensure that only the District authorized travel costs are paid with the District credit card.

The traveler may, at his/her request, stay with a family member or friend instead of at a hotel. If the traveler selects this option, the traveler shall not receive any payment in lieu of lodging costs. The traveler shall present a Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate to a Texas hotel. If the traveler fails to present the certificate, the traveler shall reimburse the District for the unallowable tax expense. The Hotel Occupancy Certificate can be found on the District's Finance Webpage and the [State Comptroller's Website](#). The Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption does not apply to out-of-state travel.

For student travel requiring an overnight stay, the maximum standard hotel allowance will be in effect. Students should be grouped according to gender and have no more than four (4) students per room. No student should ever room alone. As with employee travel, the most economical accommodations should be utilized, keeping safety in mind. The Hotel Rooming List must be attached to all requests. The request will be denied in the absence of the student list.

To avoid cancellation fees, the staff member is responsible for notifying the Finance Office or hotel prior to the cancellation deadline. If the hotel is not notified by the required deadline, the staff member may be required to pay any fees assessed by the hotel. The District will not reimburse an employee for expenses incurred as a result of not canceling a reservation.

The District will not reimburse hotel charges for internet connection fees unless the staff member receives prior approval from the supervisor or budget manager.

Lodging costs such as movies, gym facility, spa or other non-essential costs are not allowable for reimbursement or payment with any district funds.

Any individual wishing to get points for travel arrangements must claim only for their portion of the trip and coordinate upon check-in.

A detailed lodging receipt must be submitted by the traveler within three (3) business days after the travel events.

**IMPORTANT: Third-party online booking sites such as Hotels.com, Expedia, Travelocity, etc. shall not be used. Prepaid, nonrefundable rates are NOT allowed.**

### **TRANSPORTATION-MILEAGE: PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLE/DISTRICT VEHICLE**

The District has purchased vehicles for use by staff and consideration should be given to the cost efficiency of using one of these vehicles versus a personal vehicle. Taxpayer dollars should be used in the best interest of those funds and consideration should be given accordingly.

Travelers are highly encouraged to use a district-owned vehicle as the preferred method of transportation. If a district-owned vehicle is not available for the travel event, the traveler shall be

authorized to use their personal vehicle. Mileage reimbursement shall be allowable for travel events and will be made on the basis of the rates established in the [Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts](#). This rate is subject to change.

**FOUR-PER-CAR RULE:** When four (4) or fewer employees travel on the same itinerary, only **one (1)** may be reimbursed for mileage. When more than four employees travel on the same itinerary, only one (1) out of every four may be reimbursed for mileage. [Texas Government Code Section 660.044](#)

Travelers are required to calculate mileage by an electronic mapping source (such as that on [Google Maps](#) or any other online mapping service). The starting point will be the employee's home campus/department. The driving directions provided by the site shall be attached as support for the mileage reimbursement. The District may require that you explain your mileage if the total mileage (travel and miles driven in the city you are visiting) is over a reasonable amount. Mileage cannot exceed the cost of airfare.

Travelers are required to select the shortest and most economical route but may justify the selection of another route if it was chosen for safety reasons and a specific justification of the selection is given.

Mileage costs related to personal destinations before, during, or after the travel event shall not be allowable costs. In addition, mileage costs due to the traveler's error in reaching the destination, such as getting lost shall not be allowable costs.

Mileage reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle for transportation to the airport shall be allowed from the employee's home campus/department to the airport and return (one round trip) at the current mileage reimbursement rate. However, the mileage reimbursement may not exceed the cost of one round trip to and from the airport in the employee's personal vehicle plus parking at the airport.

[TexTravel](#)

Commuting from home to work or work to home is not reimbursable.

School employees using District-owned vehicles are not permitted to transport family, friends, non-school business commuters, or animals except for "service animals".

Personal use of Runge ISD vehicles is not permitted.

Mileage reimbursements submitted that exceed 120 days from the day of travel will not be reimbursed.

## **TRANSPORTATION - FLIGHTS**

Advanced planning is expected in order to maximize fare discount requirements. Airfare is typically at its lowest price 21 days before the departure date. Ticket prices will increase again 14 days before departure and once again 7 days before, therefore it is in the District's best interest to purchase airfare as early as possible.

The departure and return dates of the flight shall be based on the start and end times of the travel event and the distance of the travel location.

Travelers should travel to their destination location by the most economical means, i.e. either flight or mileage; however, travelers may opt to travel to their event destination via district/personal vehicle in lieu of flying to the event for medical or personal comfort reasons. If the traveler opts to travel via airplane, the costs/reimbursement for transportation shall be limited to the lesser of either the total of the estimated flight, rental car, and parking costs or the mileage in a privately owned vehicle.

All flights shall be purchased by the Finance Office for the most economical route and schedule to meet the travel plans. An approved Credit Card request is required to process air travel requests. The Finance Office will not purchase the ticket until they have received the approved Credit Card request.

All flights shall be purchased through Southwest Airlines (SWA) using the group or government rate plan. Flights may be purchased from other airlines due to unavailability.

Travelers on a SWA flight are allowed to check up to two (2) bags at no additional charge but limited to no more than 50 pounds each. Luggage charges for a third (3rd) bag shall not be allowable with district funds unless prior approval is received. For other airlines, please contact them for their baggage guidelines. Luggage will be reimbursed for the first checked bag each way at the exact cost with the receipt. Charges for overweight bags will not be reimbursed.

All staff members must have a valid photo identification when traveling. The name on the plane ticket must match the name on the driver's license or valid identification card.

If the traveler has to cancel the trip, the traveler must inform the Finance Office before the trip date. The District may be able to use the ticket for a future trip or recover some of the ticket cost.

When travelers make unapproved modifications to travel arrangements that result in additional charges, those additional charges will be the responsibility of the traveler unless authorized by the supervisor.

A rental car at the event location shall be allowable if it is the most economical method to access the event location and if the estimated cost is less than a taxi or shuttle.

All flight costs associated with deviations from the required travel plans, such as pre or post-personal days or canceled travel plans due to personal reasons shall be paid and/or reimbursed by the traveler.

Reimbursements will be paid for airport parking when supported by appropriate receipts.

First-class airline travel will not be permitted. The District will not reimburse for extra leg space, trip insurance, EarlyBird check-in, priority boarding or more than one (1) checked bag fee. Special circumstances must be approved by the superintendent.

**NOTE: Any airline voucher received for flight changes or cancellations is the property of Runge ISD. Vouchers may only be redeemed on District-related business travel. They are not for personal use.**

#### **TRANSPORTATION-RENTAL CAR**

Enterprise (EAN Holding) is our preferred rental car agency; however, we are able to rent from Enterprise's network or an approved state contract of rental car agencies if Enterprise is not able to accommodate our request.

Enterprise direct bills RISD, so you will need a separate PO to EAN Holdings for rental car expenses.

Rental car costs shall be allowable for travel events that require travel away from the traveler's home via a flight if the use of the rental car is the most economical mode of transportation.

Rental car costs shall not be allowable if the traveler can reach the travel destination via taxi or shuttle at a lower cost.

As a general rule, a mid-size vehicle will be rented whenever possible. Any upgrades or enhancements are personal expenditures and will be charged to the employee unless prior approval is received by the superintendent. Large SUVs or vans can be requested for groups exceeding four people.

The District is insured for rental vehicles. Travelers are advised to refuse insurance coverage offered by the car rental companies since such coverage would be duplication and a non-reimbursable expense. Charges for liability insurance supplement, personal accident insurance, safe trip insurance or personal effects insurance are not allowable costs.

Rental car costs associated with deviations from the required travel plans, such as pre or post-personal days shall be paid by the traveler.

Reimbursable expenses related to the operation of rental cars include fuel and parking.

A charge for an additional driver may only be reimbursed if incurred for a business reason.

Expenses related to the operation of rental cars that are NOT reimbursable include Texas sales tax, refueling charges for not returning the rental car with a full tank of gas (unless sufficient reason for not refueling can be given), pre-paid fuel charges, and parking or traffic violation tickets the employee receives while on company business.

Detailed rental car and fuel receipts must be submitted by the traveler within 30 business days after the travel event.

Re-Fueling Provisions: Vehicles are provided to travelers with a full tank of gas. Any amount less when a vehicle is returned is subject to a per-gallon fee not to exceed 50% above the local market price. If you are given a vehicle that does not have a full tank of gas, be sure the gas level is noted on the rental agreement. Return the vehicle with the same level of fuel in it.

#### **TRANSPORTATION - TAXI, SHUTTLE, UBER, LYFT, ETC.**

Taxi, rideshare, and shuttle costs shall be allowable for all in-state and out-of-state travel events only to and from the hotel/conference location or to and from the airport.

If a taxi, rideshare, or shuttle is shared by two or more employees, only the employee who paid for the transportation may be reimbursed for the expense. RISD shall not reimburse wait time fees or cancellation fees.

For employee travel, tips shall be allowable costs for reimbursement, not to exceed 15% of the total.

When the RISD Citi Card is being used for student travel, tips shall be allowed only with local funds, not to exceed 15% of the total.

Receipts for taxi, rideshare, or shuttle must be submitted by the traveler within 30 business days after the travel event.

#### **PARKING CHARGES**

Parking charges shall be allowable for all travel events in-state and out-of-state, as appropriate, if the traveler is traveling in a rental car, district-owned vehicle, or personal car while on travel status.

Hotel valet parking is reimbursed only when no other parking is available or when special circumstances prohibit standard parking.

Parking at the airport at the traveler's home location shall be allowable, as appropriate, for all required travel dates. Additional parking days, at the traveler's option due to pre or post-travel days, are not an allowable expense and will not be reimbursed. District vehicles shall not be left at the airport while on business travel unless 4 or more employees are riding together or unless traveling with students.

Parking may not be reimbursed if none of the mileage is reimbursable.

Parking receipts must be submitted by the traveler within 30 business days after the travel event.

### **TOLL CHARGES**

Toll charges shall be allowable for all in-state travel events, as applicable, if the traveler is traveling in a personal car while on travel status.

Toll charges while in a district-owned vehicle are forwarded to the District by the toll authority.

Tolls may not be reimbursed if none of the mileage is reimbursable.

Toll receipts, as appropriate, must be submitted by the traveler within 30 business days after the travel event.

### **REGISTRATION FEES**

Registration fees for a conference, workshop, or other training event as supported by a registration form are allowable costs. Fee-based optional events such as a speaker or awards luncheon shall be approved on a case-by-case basis if the event fee is reasonable and the traveler would derive a work-related benefit from attending the event. Fee-based optional events such as socials, excursions, tours, or other purely entertainment events are not allowable costs.

The authorized travel expenses shall be supported by the registration form and itinerary. The documentation shall include the start and end dates of the event, event location, and registration fee.

A copy of the registration form and itinerary shall be submitted with the Travel Request Form.

Proof of event attendance (name badge, certificate, etc.) is required and must be submitted upon return.

# TRAVEL CHECKLIST

To ensure compliance, the following checklist has been developed to aid the traveler.

**TRAVELER - TO DO LIST BEFORE TRAVEL:** This should be done at least two (2) weeks prior to travel.

- Get tentative approval for travel from your campus/department supervisor
- Review Travel Policy & Procedure guidelines
- Gather the following items:
  - REGISTRATION
    - Obtain the registration fees, conference details & itinerary
    - Obtain a copy of the conference/workshop brochure to verify the registration fee and deadline(s) and attach it to the Travel Request Form. The brochure should include the start and end date of the conference, location, and registration fee to support the travel expenditures.
  - LODGING
    - Get an estimate for hotel expenses per night (including taxes, surcharges, etc)
    - Find out what parking charges the hotel might have
    - Find out if the hotel provides any meals
    - For student travel, complete the Hotel Rooming List
    - Email the Superintendent with lodging needs.
  - EMPLOYEE MEALS
    - Meals are calculated at \$40 per day; \$10 breakfast, \$12 lunch, \$18 dinner
    - Remember to adjust the requested amount for meals if the conference/workshop will include any meals and if the hotel provides any meals
  - STUDENT MEALS
    - Obtain a current list of students
    - Meals are calculated at \$40 per day; \$10 breakfast, \$12 lunch, \$18 dinner
    - Tips/gratuities may not exceed 15% of the actual cost of meals
  - MILEAGE
    - Decide if you are using a privately owned vehicle or a District vehicle
    - Calculate mileage by an electronic mapping source. The starting point will be your home campus/department. Use round trip total to estimate mileage expense.
    - The current rate for mileage reimbursement will be made on the basis of the rates established [here](#). This rate is subject to change.
    - Verify if the Fou-per-Car Rule applies to your trip

- OTHER
  - If airfare is involved, get estimates from SWA and complete the Travel Request Form with the flight information.
  - If a rental car is needed, obtain estimated expenses from Enterprise. An approved PO to EAN Holdings will be required.
  - Fuel for rental cars will need to be estimated and added to your employee reimbursement.
  - Parking expenses at the hotel and conference will need to be estimated and added to your employee reimbursement
  - Taxi/Uber/Lyft expenses will need to be estimated and added to your employee reimbursement
- Prepare your travel form:
  - Complete the Travel Request Form using all the times you gathered from above
  - Obtain all necessary approvals and signatures
- Submit the following items to your campus/department secretary:
  - Travel Request Form completed with backup attachments listed below:
    - Conference itinerary that details beginning and ending dates and times of conference sessions
    - Conference registration or confirmation form
    - Electronic mapping source (Google Maps)
    - Current roster or list of students traveling
    - Hotel rooming list
    - Preferred flight information

### **CAMPUS / DEPARTMENT SECRETARY TO-DO LIST BEFORE TRAVEL**

- Verify forms for completeness and accuracy
- Verify that funds are available in your campus/department budget
- Send approved Travel Request Form and supporting documents to the Finance Office

### **TRAVELER BEFORE AND DURING THE TRIP**

- Pick up keys to school vehicle from Transportation
- Pick up RISD Citi Card from the Finance Office
- Print the Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate
- Present Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate to front desk upon check-in
- Physically check out at the hotel front desk and review the hotel folio. Confirm no state tax has been charged
- An itemized receipt is required for all RISD Citi Card expenditures. Ensure that all credit card guidelines are adhered to
- In the event that the trip is extended due to extenuating circumstances such as weather or other delays, contact your immediate supervisor.

### **TRAVELER AFTER THE TRIP**

- Return RISD Citi Card & the following to the Finance Office within three (3) business days:
  - Itemized hotel receipt
  - All itemized receipts associated with student travel (meals, parking, fuel)
- Submit the following to your campus/department secretary within 30 business days after the travel event:
  - Check Request Reimbursement Form
  - Itemized receipts for parking, transportation (taxis, Uber, Lyft, etc.), and fuel (if you utilized a District vehicle)
  - Proof of conference attendance (badge, certificate, etc.)
- You will be reimbursed via check

### **CAMPUS / DEPARTMENT SECRETARY AFTER THE TRIP**

- Submit a check request for the traveler's expense reimbursement and attach the following:
  - Expense Reimbursement Form
  - Itemized receipts for parking, transportation (taxis, Uber, Lyft, etc.), and fuel (if you utilized a District vehicle)
  - Proof of conference attendance (badge, certificate, etc.)