



## **BOARD & STAFF TRAVEL**

### **I. PURPOSE**

To establish criteria and approval authority for reimbursement of travel and meal expenses for Sonoma County Employees' Retirement Association (SCERA) employees (including the Chief Executive Officer), service providers and Trustees.

### **II. POLICY**

SCERA 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 SCERA 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.

SCERA employees, service providers and Trustees will obtain prior approval, on a travel authorization form, from the Chief Executive Officer (or designee) for travel and meal reimbursements under this policy. Upon approval by Chief Executive Officer or designee, employees will be reimbursed for expenses incurred.

#### **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 SCERA business, representing SCERA in an official capacity, or obtaining training or information directly beneficial to SCERA operations.
  - b. The actual cost of travel should be reasonable, utilizing the least expensive methods available as determined by the Chief Executive Officer or designee, given the particular circumstances involved in each trip.
  - c. By Chief Executive Officer or designee 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 Chief Executive Officer or designee. Government or group rates shall be used when available. Personal vehicle mileage costs will be reimbursed based on the provisions of the current applicable salary resolution. A personal automobile mileage claim form must be completed for mileage reimbursement. Personal vehicle mileage costs will be reimbursed through payroll. If transportation does not begin and end in Sonoma County, Board approval of transportation expense reimbursement is required.

b. Lodging expenses.

Actual and necessary lodging expenses will be paid or reimbursed when travel on official SCERA 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. In the event that government rates are not available at a given time or in a given area, lodging rates that do not exceed the median retail price for lodging for that area shall be considered reasonable and reimbursable. By Chief Executive Officer or designee approving the lodging reimbursement, it is assumed that the lodging expenses incurred are considered reasonable and necessary.

c. Meal expenses.

Actual and necessary meal (breakfast, lunch and dinner) expenses, including gratuities, may be paid or reimbursed when traveling on official SCERA business outside the geographical boundaries of Sonoma County and should not exceed a maximum of \$90 each day per person. Receipts are required to document meal expenses under

this provision. A meal expense is not necessary and will not be paid or reimbursed by SCERA if that meal is included, for no additional charge, as part of a conference or mode of travel (e.g. airline in-flight meals).

If traveling in a group, an individual may cover the cost of meals for a group and claim reimbursement for the full amount. In this case, the number of people for whom the meal was purchased must be noted, along with their names, titles and a statement of the business purpose.

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

Snacks, including vending machine purchases, bottled water, coffee and mini-bar charges will not be paid or reimbursed by SCERA.

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 Chief Executive Officer or designee. 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 SCERA, and SCERA 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 Chief Executive Officer or designee 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 Chief Executive Officer or designee.

3. Expense report content and submission requirements.

All expense reimbursement requests must be submitted on an authorization for travel and expenses report form (expense reports). Expense reports must identify how the expenses relate to the conduct of SCERA business and document that the expense in question met the requirements of this policy. Expense reports must be submitted within 60 days of return and must be accompanied by itemized receipts documenting each expense. In some cases, itemized receipts may not be readily available, such as for tips, parking meters, or bridge tolls. In these limited instances, the employee or Trustee may submit a Replacement Receipt Form, signed by the employee or Trustee, certifying that the expense was incurred and is reimbursable and an itemized receipt is not available to submit. This Replacement Receipt Form will serve as the official receipt documenting the expense. Employees and Trustees should make every attempt to obtain itemized receipts for all travel expenses claimed.

B. Additional Meal Reimbursement Criteria for In-County Meals and Drinks

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

SCERA employees, service providers and Trustees shall be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred while promoting the interests of SCERA within their particular areas of responsibility. Such expenses may include costs for persons who are not SCERA employees but who are involved in official SCERA 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 daily meal expense limit allowed by this policy.

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

With Chief Executive Officer or designee 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 meal time, may be paid or reimbursed by SCERA. 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 SCERA. Scheduling meetings during mealtimes should be necessary and only in extraordinary circumstances. 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 Chief Executive Officer or designee approval, SCERA 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 number of people these items were provided for. By Chief Executive Officer or designee 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 SCERA budget must be approved by the Board prior to the travel.

D. Travel Budget

The Board shall set an appropriation within the annual budget for SCERA employees, service providers and Trustees education/travel use. The annual fiscal

year budget shall be adopted at a public meeting each year. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for developing and managing education and travel expense programs consistent with the best interests of SCERA 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 9/20/2007.

Reviewed by Administration on 12/16/2010.

Reviewed by Administration & Board on 3/15/2012.

Reviewed and revised by the Board on 2/26/15, 7/23/15 and 7/26/18.