

# NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ACCREDITATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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## TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICY as of December 2008

The following policies shall apply to NCATE payment of approved travel expenses, whether for NCATE staff travel or for volunteers serving on governance boards, the Board of Examiners (“BOE”), committee members, contractors and sub-contractors, and participants in grant-funded meetings subject to additional policies of grantors including but not limited to federal government grants. These policies shall apply whether NCATE or an institution pays the expenses directly, is direct-billed, or reimburses the staff member or volunteer (“traveler”).

NCATE will provide travelers with a travel reimbursement voucher form that bears the name of the meeting or event, the dates and location of the event, and the appropriate charge codes. All original receipts must be stapled to the **back** of the voucher. Travelers are asked to assist in the clarity of the reimbursement process by adding up and clearly marking the “Grand Total” that documents and highlights the traveler’s expectation of the amount to be reimbursed.

Reimbursements are normally made by NCATE within one week of receipt at the NCATE office.

### Transportation

Effective Fall 2008, all travelers must book transportation through the NCATE travel agency, Experient and have the charge direct-billed to NCATE. The only exception to this requirement is if travel is being split between NCATE and one or more other organizations. Advance approval for the exception must be obtained from NCATE’s Director of Finance and Administration. There are two methods of booking through Experient. In both cases the traveler will be required to provide the authorization/charge code assigned by the NCATE staff member responsible for the meeting or event.

**By Phone:** If you plan to always book your travel through a live person on the telephone, please enter your profile at <http://www2.expoedge.com/AirProfile/>. (List NCATE as the company and indicate the NCATE American Express BTA Account will pay for your ticket – no need for the card number since they already have it on file.) Once your profile is entered, you may speak to any of the travel agents at **800-255-8664** about booking travel, or send an email to [airtravel@experient-inc.com](mailto:airtravel@experient-inc.com) with your basic travel requirements and they will contact you with the available options that meet your specifications and our travel policies. You may also call Experient without entering your profile, but it will take longer for the booking process each time.

**On Line:** If you prefer to book your tickets on-line yourself, we ask that you do so through Experient’s Travelport System at [www.travelport.net/registration](http://www.travelport.net/registration) (the company name should be listed as Experient and the Pin is QNHLHK77). Once you’ve entered your profile, you can search for flights at any time and book them the same way you would with Expedia, Orbitz or any of the other on-line services. [Neither Southwest or Jet Blue participate in Travelport, so reservations on these airlines must be made by calling Experient directly.]

NCATE **requires** that approved travel take advantage of reduced fares by booking 21 days in advance. The following cost-savings strategies are strongly encouraged:

- **Replying the same day** to Experient to approve a proposed travel itinerary allows a quoted fare to be booked while it is still viable, and avoids the missing of advance deadlines.
- For Washington, DC area meetings conducted by NCATE, travelers are encouraged to check on fares to BWI or Dulles Airport(s), as in many cases, the airfare is significantly less than Reagan National. For airfares where the difference in fare is more than \$200 to use Reagan National, travelers are to call the NCATE staff member responsible for the meeting or event, or the NCATE Finance Department, for guidance and approval.
- Although flights may be available to leave immediately after a meeting, site visit or event, a flight two hours later may be significantly less expensive. You may be asked to consider traveling one day early or staying one extra night, if the airfare difference is greater than the additional hotel and meals cost, which will be reimbursed by NCATE.
- NCATE would like to accommodate requests to use specific airlines to utilize frequent-flyer upgrades or earn mileage, or to avoid connecting flights or to adhere to certain time schedules. However, when such requests add significantly to either the cost of the fare, or to the complexity of the transaction for the travel agency, travelers are to call the NCATE Finance Department for guidance and approval.

NCATE recognizes that circumstances and personal emergencies sometimes require the change of travel plans. However, the change of nonrefundable or advance-purchase airline tickets can significantly increase the expense of the fare. Therefore, NCATE is willing to pay up to **one** service fee for ticket changes per trip, up to a maximum of \$150.00. Changes that result in fare increases, more than \$150.00 over the originally booked fare, will be the responsibility of the traveler or institution or organization requesting the change, unless approved in advance by the Director of Finance and Administration or the Vice-President of the applicable NCATE department.

Recognizing the trend in the airline industry to charge for checked baggage, NCATE will reimburse travelers for the **first** bag checked if an airline charges a fee. Efforts should be made to obtain a receipt for this cost. Fees for additional checked bags are the responsibility of the traveler.

In the event that air transportation is unavailable or impractical, reimbursement will be made for train fare, or automobile travel at the rate of \$0.60 per mile, plus tolls, parking, lodging and meals. If air or other public transportation is available and practical, but an individual elects to travel by private automobile, reimbursement will be provided to a maximum of round trip coach class airfare between the point of origin and destination.

Costs of travel by taxi or other local transportation will be reimbursed if accompanied by appropriate documentation (receipt or note if the receipt should be lost). Unusual or excessive charges must be explained.

## Housing and Meals

NCATE will have hotels direct billed when possible. Hotel bills must be signed to indicate the traveler's approval of charges. If the traveler pays for lodging and meals, a paid hotel bill must be included with request for reimbursement.

NCATE now follows the per diem rates established for Federal Employees. Meals will be reimbursed at actual cost (attach original receipts), bearing in mind the individual meal guidelines which are listed on the front of the voucher: **\$12.00 breakfast, \$18.00 lunch, \$31.00 dinner, \$3.00 tips/day and incidentals**. The \$3.00 tips/day are intended to be for skycaps, maids at hotels, etc. and not tips on meals. At sponsored conferences and events, NCATE or the institution being visited provides many meals as noted (blocked) on the voucher; reimbursement will not be made for those meals if consumed elsewhere.

## Accreditation Visits by BOE Members

The voucher for the on-site accreditation visit is sent to BOE members prior to the visit in a package that includes the cover letter with the travel code, return envelope(s), and instructions to retrieve other visit materials from the NCATE website. In addition, the voucher form is also available from the Web. All NCATE travel expense reimbursement policies apply to accreditation visits; in addition, if the institution has not arranged for direct billing of the hotel bill, team members are reimbursed for the hotel as well.

NCATE does not reimburse team *state consultants* or NEA/AFT representatives. Either the state agency responsible for program approval, or the NEA/AFT affiliate, will reimburse consultants. BOE members are encouraged to assist in keeping the reimbursement processes separate by refraining from combining meal and other charges.

NCATE appreciates the service of members of the BOE and is committed to reimbursing their expenses as quickly as possible to reduce the financial and logistical inconvenience to these vitally needed volunteers. Although NCATE now bills the institutions a set fee for these visits rather than the actual cost, BOE Members are still asked to submit their expenses promptly. BOE Members are asked to assist in completing this cycle by:

- Submitting their vouchers and receipts on a timely basis, preferably within 10 days of the end of the visit. Vouchers will be considered late, and may not be reimbursed, by February 1 for fall accreditation visits, and June 15 for spring accreditation visits.
- Notifying the Finance Department if a voucher was sent but reimbursement not received within two weeks, so that it can be assumed lost in the mail and replicated for payment.
- Notifying the Finance Department, by e-mail if possible, immediately after the visit if there are no expenses to reimburse.
- Including the original air ticket and/or printed itinerary with the voucher, even though it was booked through Experient.

## **Expenses That Will Not Be Reimbursed by NCATE**

Personal expenses incurred during an NCATE hotel stay are the traveler's sole responsibility and must be paid at time of check-out from the hotel, even when the main charges are direct-billed to NCATE or an institution during an accreditation visit. Examples include bar bills, newspapers, telephone calls unrelated to NCATE business other than reasonable 'safe arrival' calls, movie charges, dry cleaning or laundry, charges to use a hotel's spa or health club, and gift shop charges. Internet connection charges by hotels will be paid or reimbursed only for pre-approved NCATE use, ie access to the Accreditation Information Management System [AIMS]. Childcare, house-sitting, and pet boarding expenses during the traveler's absence while on NCATE travel are the traveler's sole responsibility.

## **Substitute Teacher Pay**

School districts in many instances pay the costs of substitute teachers to replace NCATE volunteers. NCATE will reimburse the school or school district employers only of NEA or AFT-appointed volunteers serving on governance boards, the Board of Examiners ("BOE"), and committees, and be itself reimbursed by funds provided by the NEA or AFT for that purpose. Grant-funded meetings may reimburse the school or school district employers of their volunteers, for the substitute teacher pay, subject to further policies stated by grantors. NEA or AFT-appointed volunteers should obtain an Application for Substitute Teacher Pay form from NCATE's website.

## **Special Travel Requirements for Federal Grants**

There are unique travel requirements while supporting federal government grants. These specific procedures apply to all NCATE staff, its subcontractors and consultants. Non-compliance with these procedures may result in the non-recovery of staff, subcontractor, or consultant expense reimbursements. These procedures are in addition to NCATE's *Travel Reimbursement Policy* as outlined in the rest of this document. Should there be a conflict with NCATE's procedure, then the travel procedure for federal government grants takes precedence.

When traveling in support of federal grants please use NCATE's *Travel Reimbursement Voucher* as provided by the Project Director or their designee. Failure to use this form will result in delay of travel reimbursement as we cannot accept other forms. Upon completion of the travel, the expense voucher with attached receipts and documentation should be submitted within 14 calendar days.

All travel is authorized through the Project Director or their designee. All air fares shall be arranged and processed in accordance with the "*Transportation*" section of this document. Any foreign travel must be specifically authorized and requires considerable advance approval time before booking.

Unlike the practice at some institutions, per diem is not automatically paid regardless of actual expenses. Reimbursement is based on the actual lodging cost incurred, not to exceed the amount prescribed in the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), the Joint Travel Regulations and/or the Standardized Regulations; and a fixed Meal and Incidental Expense (M&IE) amount as provided, depending on the location. Original receipts are required for lodging, meals, air/rail tickets, car rental, taxi, long distance telephone calls, business conferences, materials or parts purchased on travel, and any other unique expense item regardless of the dollar value. Expenses

will not be paid for travel within a 100 mile radius of your permanent duty station, unless there is an overnight stay.

When submitting your travel reimbursement, please attach the current government per diem rates to the *Travel Reimbursement Voucher* form. Print out the applicable per diem rates from the website, [http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?programId=9704&channelId=-15943&oid=16365&contentId=17943&pageTypeId=8203&contentType=GSA\\_BASIC&programPage=%2Fep%2Fprogram%2FgsaBasic.jsp&P=MTT](http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?programId=9704&channelId=-15943&oid=16365&contentId=17943&pageTypeId=8203&contentType=GSA_BASIC&programPage=%2Fep%2Fprogram%2FgsaBasic.jsp&P=MTT). These per diem rate schedules must be retained with the travel expense reports to document the per diems used.

In the event that the daily overnight stay would reasonably exceed the stipulated government per diem rate, NCATE must be notified before the trip so that we may obtain advance approval to exceed the government per diem from the grants officer. Else, amounts exceeding the per diem rates will not be reimbursed to staff, subcontractors, or consultants.

### **Questions**

Questions or requests for clarification of these guidelines may be addressed to the NCATE Finance Department at 202-466-7496.