

## **RESOLUTION 2026-16**

### **A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SAN BENITO COUNTY WATER DISTRICT ADOPTING A POLICY FOR TRAVEL AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT AND REPEALING CONFLICTING RESOLUTIONS OR PORTIONS THEREOF**

The Board of Directors of the San Benito County Water District hereby resolves as follows:

#### **1. Scope and Purpose**

##### **1.1 Scope**

This Administrative Policy Instruction (API) applies to San Benito County Water District (District) Board of Directors and other Board of Director appointed commissioners and committee members, employees and volunteers (travelers) who travel on official business for the San Benito County Water District. All travel arrangements, reconciliations, and reimbursements shall be performed within the scope of delegated authority and in compliance with all applicable Federal statutes, State, and District acts, and policies. This policy shall be formally adopted by the Board of Directors, and any changes thereto shall also be adopted by Board of Directors.

##### **1.2 Purpose**

The San Benito County Water District recognizes the constructive value of professional conferences, seminars, meetings, and training and provides travel funds for Travelers who attend such official events. Travelers shall be entitled to reimbursement for their reasonable expenses associated with travel, meals, lodging, and other actual and necessary expenses associated with attending such events in a manner and in the amounts as set forth in this policy. The purpose of this policy is to establish business travel guidelines for Board of Director and other Board of Director appointed commissioners and committee members, employees, and volunteers that are fair, accountable, and transparent. This Policy is to provide standards regarding reimbursement of Travelers expenses for activities related to District business, and to ensure District stewardship of public resources.

## **2. Policy**

### **2.1 Responsibilities**

#### **a. Finance Division**

Administers and monitors compliance with the travel policy and processes department requests for travel prepayments, advances, and reimbursements.

#### **b. Department Head**

Approves travel requests, reconciliations, and reimbursements. The Department Head may delegate this authority, but they are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all approved travel requests comply with the travel policy and that funds are available within the department's budget for the approved travel.

#### **c. Traveler**

Represents the San Benito County Water District at an approved event (meeting, training, conference, etc.) and verifies the accuracy of bills and other travel documents before accepting or paying said bills, reports all expenses promptly and accurately with the required documentation, and requests reimbursement for necessary and reasonable expenses.

### **2.2 General Provisions**

**A.** Travelers are responsible for understanding and complying with this travel policy and are expected to exercise good judgment with respect to travel expenses.

**B.** It is the policy of the San Benito County Water District that no Traveler shall experience personal financial loss for reasonable and necessary costs as a result of representing the San Benito County Water District, as long as the expenses are within the guidelines set forth in this policy.

**C.** Business travel commences when the Traveler leaves his/her home or District Office for official District business for a destination at least 25 miles outside the District. Generally, business travel ends when the Traveler returns to their residence or District Office. Same Day Travel: Trips of less than 25 miles one way from Hollister are considered local travel and do not qualify for an overnight stay or per diem rates.

**D.** Travelers shall provide brief reports at the next regular meeting on their business travel and meetings attended at the expense of the District (as required by Government Code 53232.3(d)).

**E.** If a trip includes both business and personal travel, Travelers are personally responsible for any personal travel expenses.

**F.** Reimbursement of travel expenses is limited to travel by the most direct and common route and by the most economical means of transport. That portion of any travel, which is unnecessarily done by indirect route, is not in the interest of the District, or is for personal business, will not be reimbursed.

**G.** Expenses which are not approved or which are not in compliance with this policy, such as delinquent submission of travel documents or outstanding balances owed to the District, will become the Traveler's personal responsibility and may result in any one or more of the following consequences (as outlined in Government Section 53232.4):

1. Notification to the full Board of Director regarding violations of this policy.
2. Reporting travel advances or expense reimbursements as taxable income to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and State of California taxing authority.
3. Suspension of travel privileges at the discretion of the Board of Director.
4. Formal disciplinary procedures at the discretion of the Board of Director.
5. Require the Traveler to return any travel funds that were advanced.

### **2.3 Authorization for Travel**

**A.** Travelers must obtain Board of Director or authorized designee approval prior to making travel arrangements.

**B.** Travelers are personally responsible for any changes or upgrades in transportation and/or accommodations that are not approved by the Board of Director or designee.

### **2.4 Examples of types of travel which are covered by this policy are as follows:**

**A.** Attendance at District events, an approved conference, convention, hearing, training, seminar, or other meeting.

**B.** Communicating with representatives of regional, state, and national government on District adopted policy positions.

**C.** Attending educational seminars designed to improve Traveler's skills and knowledge levels.

**D.** Participating in regional, state, and national organizations whose activities affect the District's interests.

**E.** Implementing a District-approved strategy for attracting or retaining businesses.

**F.** Other such activities requiring travel, which is clearly necessary and in the best interest of the District.

## **2.5 Travel Funded by Another Entity**

In advance of travel, the Board of Director must determine if the Traveler is to be reimbursed at either the District's or the other entity's per diem rate. If the travel costs are borne by the District, reimbursement from the other entity shall be paid to the District. If another entity's funds are used, no District advance shall be made unless approved by the Board of Director or authorized designee.

## **2.6 Public Records Requirement**

All documents related to reimbursable District travel expenditures are public records and may be subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act (Government Code §6250-6270). The District's Records Retention Schedule requires that travel documents be retained for five (5) years.

## **3. Travel Arrangements**

**3.1** Advances for estimated out-of-pocket expenses will not be issued for less than \$100.

**3.2** In order to ensure timely arrangements, advances, prepayments, reconciliations, and reimbursements, Travelers should consider the following timelines:

**A.** Within ten (10) working days prior to the Board of Director meeting to approve the advance request: The advance travel request should be coordinated with the General Manager's staff to agendaize the travel request for Board of Directors approval.

**B.** At least ten (10) working days prior to the trip: Board of Directors approval date should be at least ten (10) working days prior to the trip. Requests for advances and prepayments (such as those for hotel reservation and course/conference registration) are to be submitted to the Finance Division.

**C.** Within thirty (30) working days following the trip (unless on a CalCard): The required receipts are to be submitted to the Finance Division upon return from the approved trip. The following table highlights acceptable types of travel documentation:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Documentation Required</b>
Meals and Incidentals	None unless Traveler claims actual costs if they exceed Incidentals for the daily per diem.
Lodging	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hotel receipts must be itemized</li> <li>2. Meals charged to the room should be listed separately from hotel charges.</li> <li>3. Credit card receipts may not be substituted for itemized hotel receipts.</li> </ol>
Transportation (Air, Ground, Rail, or Bus)	<p>Itinerary or confirmation document.  Itemized receipt unless it is not available.</p>
Registration Fees	Receipt
District Vehicle	Gas receipts – unless Traveler was issued a District Calcard or use fuel vendor.
Private Vehicle	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Authorization by General Manager.</li> <li>2. Documentation that demonstrates mileage calculation (e.g., Internet-based map with mileage).</li> <li>3. Gas is not reimbursed as it is part of the mileage rate.</li> </ol>

### **3.3 Emergency Travel**

Emergency travel is applicable only when time constraints between completion of approval and the date of the actual event do not allow for standard procedures to be followed. In this occasion, the General Manager or their authorized designee must approve the travel request as soon as possible after the fact. Generally, conferences and meetings do not constitute emergency travel. District policy regarding transportation, lodging, meals, registration, and mileage are still applicable.

## **4 Lodging**

### **4.1 Lodging Reimbursement**

Reimbursement of lodging is limited to the actual cost of a single room. When making arrangements for lodging, the government, group, conference, or promotional rates shall be requested. The District will not reimburse the Traveler for luxury upgrades (e.g., ocean views, king-size beds, suites, etc.). When lodging at a conference facility is full, lodging at a comparable hotel shall be acceptable. An original, dated and itemized hotel receipt must accompany completed claims for lodging.

### **4.2 Cancellations**

Hotel cancellations are the responsibility of the Traveler. Hotels generally require a 48-hour advance notice for cancellations. Any cancellation charges incurred will be billed to the Traveler unless reasonable justification is provided and approved by the General Manager or authorized designee.

### **4.3 Companion Travel**

When a spouse, domestic partner, or other companion travel with a Traveler on official business, reimbursement for the Traveler's lodging will be at the single occupancy rate for the accommodations. If the Traveler arranges for the lodging it is the responsibility of the Traveler to obtain the lodging rate for both single and double occupancy.

### **4.4 Lodging in a Private Residence**

Travelers who stay in a private residence with relatives or friends while traveling on business are not eligible for reimbursement of lodging costs.

## **5 Meals**

### **5.1 Reimbursement Rates**

The District maximum full day meal and incidental expenses rate shall be equal to the lower of the per-meal guideline amount allowed by the GSA – [www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem) or maximum federal per diem meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) rate established by the IRS. Claims for out-of-County meals taken in conjunction with travel that includes overnight stay away from the traveler's home shall be reimbursed in the form of a "per diem allowance", which means the traveler is eligible to be reimbursed at the maximum rate allowed and receipts are not required.

Note: As a reminder, IRS rules state that meal reimbursements for non-overnight travel results in taxable income to the Traveler.

## 5.2 Reimbursement Schedule

In order to be reimbursed for the cost of meals, travel must begin or end as shown in the following schedule:

<b>Meal</b>	<b>Travel Begins Before</b>	<b>Travel Ends After</b>
<b>Breakfast</b>	7:00 a.m.	N/A
<b>Lunch</b>	11:00 a.m.	1:00 p.m.
<b>Dinner</b>	5:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.

To determine eligibility for reimbursement, travel shall be considered to begin when the Traveler departs their residence or District Office.

## 5.3 Tips

Gratuities for meals are included in the per diem rates and are not reimbursed separately.

## 6 Transportation

Travel will be by the most economical means available, taking into consideration requirements for meal reimbursement, lodging, and Traveler time. When a private vehicle is used as the means of transportation, reimbursement will be in an amount not to exceed the lowest available airfare. However, if a location is not served by an airline, reimbursement will be provided for travel by the most direct route.

### 6.1 Air Travel

#### A. Arrangements

1. Air travel arrangements for Travelers are to be made by the Traveler through the Internet, travel agency, or directly through the common carrier.
2. The Traveler will arrange for reservations and tickets for approved travel requests. The most economical means available fare will be used for air travel. As a general rule, Travelers will be expected to accept flights departing within two (2) hours of the desired departure time.

#### B. Changes, Cancellations, and Unused Tickets

Generally, tickets are non-refundable and non-transferable and fees will be incurred for any changes made once the reservations are booked. Flights with cancellation penalties should be carefully monitored by the Traveler. If cancellation occurs due to a District-related change or circumstances beyond the Traveler's control, the Traveler's budget will pay for the penalty cost. However, if the cancellation occurs due to a Traveler's personal request, the Traveler will be required to pay the penalty. Unused tickets or portions of unused tickets must be returned to the department. For tickets purchased through the Internet, the Traveler should work with the Finance Office to ensure credit is received for unused tickets or portions of unused tickets.

### **C. Privately-owned Aircraft**

Travelers are prohibited from piloting or traveling in privately-owned aircraft (i.e., non-commercial airlines), while conducting District business without written approval of the General Manager. Written approval will be maintained by the General Manager's office.

### **D. Frequent Flyer Mileage**

Travelers may participate in frequent flyer programs however the District will not incur extra expenses in order to accommodate the Traveler's preferred frequent flyer program.

## **6.2 Car Rental**

**A.** Travelers should use public transportation (taxis, airport shuttles, buses, etc.) whenever it is more economical than a rental car. General Manager may approve car rentals. Generally, a rental car should be requested when:

1. Multiple business meetings require travel between locations and public transportation is impractical.
2. Two travelers are attending the same meeting and one rental car for the group would be more economical.
3. It is less expensive to rent a car overall compared to alternative forms of transportation.

### **B. Arrangements**

Travelers should request car rental arrangements through the Enterprise Rent-a-Car App on the internet page using the District's approval codes. This agreement was established for use by the State of California, whose rates (which includes insurances) have been made available to the District.

## **C. Insurance**

Because the San Benito County Water District assumes risk for a Traveler conducting official District business, it is not necessary for the Traveler to purchase extra insurance coverage when renting a car for District business use. Additionally, Travelers are encouraged to use rental agencies that have contracts with the State of California because those rates generally include the Collision Damage Waiver and Liability Coverage. Travelers may choose to purchase additional insurance, but it will not be reimbursed by the District.

## **D. Fuel**

Travelers must fill the gas tank before returning a rental car to avoid fuel surcharges. Or, if it is the most economical means available a Traveler can use the prepaid fuel option. Receipts are necessary for reimbursement of fuel costs unless the Traveler uses a District-issued CalCard.

### **6.3 Travel by District Vehicle**

**A.** Travelers who use District vehicles must follow the provisions of the District's Policy.

**B.** If more than one Traveler is traveling on the same trip, all reasonable efforts will be made to minimize transportation costs by use of a single vehicle.

### **6.4 Travel by Private Vehicle**

#### **A. Authorization**

General Manager or designee approval is required when the Traveler requests to use a private vehicle.

#### **B. Reimbursement**

The District will reimburse for mileage at the current IRS standard rate per mile which includes gas, maintenance, and vehicle related costs. Gas costs will not be reimbursed separately. The District's maximum mileage reimbursement will not exceed the cost of the lowest available airfare.

**C.** Carpooling Travelers Mileage reimbursement will be payable only to the owner of the vehicle in which the Travelers are carpooling.

## **6.5 Collisions/ Accidents**

### **A. District Owned Vehicles and Privately Owned Vehicles**

Travelers who are involved in vehicle collisions or accidents while driving a District owned vehicle or privately owned vehicle while on District business are required to file an accident report with Risk Management within 24 hours (48 hours if the accident occurs on a weekend).

**B. Rental Car Travelers** who are involved in vehicle collisions while driving a rental car must report the accident to the Assistant General Manager within 24 hours (48 hours if the accident occurs on a weekend). The Traveler should keep a copy of all pertinent information and provide copies to the Assistant General Manager to assist in settling claims.

## **6.6 Other**

Trains, buses, ferries, or other means of ground transportation may be used. Reimbursement will not exceed the cost of the most economical means available.

## **7 Additional Reimbursements**

### **7.1 Incidental per diem.**

For each day of travel, the employee will receive a reimbursement at the current GSA daily rate for incidental travel expenses. Personal telephone calls, baggage handling, and bellhop tips are examples of incidental costs covered by this per diem.

### **7.2 Other Reimbursable Expenses**

**A.** The following expenses are reimbursable at actual cost with receipts:

1. Necessary taxicab, Uber or Lyft, airport transportation, bus fare, bridge tolls, etc.
2. Conference materials such as tapes, reports, etc.
3. Parking fees
4. Reasonable telephone/fax/internet connectivity charges associated with official District business
5. Visa and passport expenses, when directly related to District travel

**B.** Without receipt at actual cost:

1. BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) and other rapid transit system fares (must include fee schedule with reimbursement request).

**C.** Other justifiable expenses Other justifiable expenses will be approved based on review of special circumstances.

### **7.3 Non-reimbursable Expenses**

The District will not reimburse Traveler for expenses incurred outside the scope of the Traveler's duties including, for example, and not limiting, the following:

1. Airline-related: Airline club membership dues, air-phone usage, in-flight headsets;
2. Political or charitable contributions or events;
3. Family expenses, including partner's expenses when accompanying a Traveler on District-related business, as well as children-or pet-related expenses;
4. Entertainment expenses, including theater, movies (in-room or at the theater), sporting events (including gym, massage and/or golf related expenses), or other cultural events;
5. Non-mileage personal automobile expenses, including repairs, traffic citations, insurance, or gasoline;
6. Personal losses incurred while on District business;
7. Alcoholic beverages;
8. Auto-related: Rental upgrades, personal auto repairs, accident insurance, parking tickets, traffic violations, personal auto expenses other than mileage;
9. Expenses associated with a non-District employee who accompanies the Traveler on official District business (e.g., spouse or domestic partner's transportation, lodging, and/or meals);
10. Loss or theft of personal funds, property or luggage;
11. Non-essential program activities associated with a conference/seminar unless approved by General Manager or designee, such as sports tournaments, social activities, tours, etc., that are not included with the conference registration; and

12. Personal expenses: Personal credit card annual fees, babysitting or dependent care, pet care (including kennel and pet sitting fees), computer rental for personal use, barber, hairdresser, laundry, spa services (saunas, massages, facials, etc.), toiletries, shoeshine, etc.

#### **7.4 Extended Personal Travel**

Travelers who combine personal travel with business travel must identify and pay for the personal segment of the trip. The District will not reimburse a Traveler for expenses incurred beyond the most economical means available portion of the business travel when the Traveler chooses to extend his/her time at the destination for personal reasons (i.e., the Traveler takes vacation or stays through the weekend). Reimbursable expenses will cease to accrue when the Traveler is outside the most economical means available portion of the business portion of the trip. Reimbursement for car rental and airport parking must be prorated to allow reimbursement for only those costs associated with District business.

#### **7.5 Cash Advance**

From time to time, it may be necessary for a Traveler to request a cash advance to cover anticipated expenses when traveling or doing business on the District's behalf. Such requests for advance should be submitted to the General Manager fourteen (14) days before the need for the advance with the following information:

1. The purpose of the expenditure(s);
2. The benefits of such expenditure to the District;
3. The anticipated amount of the expenditure(s) (for example, hotel rates, meal costs, and transportation expenses); and
4. The dates of the expenditure(s).

Any unused advance must be returned to the General Manager within two business days of the Traveler's return, along with an expense report and receipts documenting how the advance was used in compliance with this policy.

#### **8 International Travel**

The most economical and practical accommodations available considering the purpose of the meeting, transportation costs, time and other relevant factors will be reimbursed. Receipts for international travel must be itemized and accompanied by an exchange rate calculation. International travel should have prior approval from the Board of Directors.

## **9 Reports to Board of Directors**

At the Board of Director's Meeting following an activity, each Board Member must briefly report on meeting attended at District expense.

## **10 Compliance with Laws**

Some expenditures may be subject to reporting under the Political Reform Act and other laws. All agency expenditures are public records subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

## **11 Violation of this Policy**

Use of public resources or falsifying expense reports in violation of this policy may result in any or all of the following:

1. Loss of reimbursement privileges;
2. A demand for restitution to the District;
3. The District's reporting the expenses as income the Board Member to state and federal tax authorities;
4. Civil penalties of up to \$1,000 per day and three times the value of the resources used; and
5. Prosecution for misuse of public resources.

## **12 Conflicting Resolutions:**

This Resolution shall supersede and repeal any previous resolutions or provisions thereof that are in conflict herewith, including, but not limited to, the paragraph titled "Reimbursement of Expenses" of Resolution 96-18, A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the San Benito County Water District Adopting Regulations pertaining to the Responsibilities, Proceedings and Activities of the Board of Directors of the District.

**THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION** was adopted at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the San Benito County Water District held on June 24, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES: DIRECTORS: Wright, Tonascia, Flores & Williams

NOES: DIRECTORS: None

ABSENT: DIRECTORS: Freeman

ABSTAIN: DIRECTORS: None

(Resolution #2026-16 signed by the  
presiding board member and attested  
by the board secretary)

/s/Mark Wright  
Mark Wright  
President

ATTEST: /s/Barbara L. Mauro  
Barbara L. Mauro  
Board Secretary