

**The Midlands STEM Charter School
Travel and Meals Policy and Procedures**

OFFICE OF RESPONSIBILITY: Finance

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2026

THE MIDLANDS STEM CHARTER SCHOOL RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT, IN WHOLE OR IN PART.

POLICY:

Travel and transportation at the expense of Midlands STEM Charter School will be authorized only when officially justified and by those means which meet State and Federal Government requirements consistent with good management practices. The School Leaders are empowered to make non-material modifications to Institute policies without additional approval of the Board of Directors.

All Midlands STEM Charter School travel expenses must be prior approved by the Executive Director and Director of Operations prior to purchase.

PROCEDURE:

General Information

The following procedures have been established for travel and expenses. If federal funds are being used for travel and expenses, additional measures will be taken as outlined in this document.

TRAVEL ADVANCES (PRIOR TRIP EXPENSES):

Registration

The Midlands STEM Charter School will pay the registration fee in advance for attendance for all approved conference(s), seminar(s), or workshop(s). Any meal included in the registration fee cannot be claimed on an expense report even if the traveler chooses not to partake of the meal. An itinerary should be attached to all expense reports that request per diem.

Transportation

All flights should be booked in advance using a Midlands STEM Charter School credit card. If the traveler elects to book their flight expenses on their personal credit card, then the traveler will not be reimbursed for flight expenses until returning from travel. When purchasing flights, employees may choose a transferable or refundable rate.

Lodging

The Midlands STEM Charter School will pay for hotel lodging in advance for attendance at approved conference(s), seminar(s), or workshop(s). All lodging should be booked using a Midlands STEM Charter School owned credit card. If the traveler elects to book their lodging expenses on their personal credit card, then the traveler will not be reimbursed for the lodging expenses until the return from travel. Hotel reimbursements for one-day meetings will not be reimbursed unless arrangements have been pre-approved with the School Leader. Hotel lodging may be paid for the night before a one-day or multiple-day conference, seminar, or workshop only if the employee can not travel to the conference on time if they depart by 8:00 AM.

Staff members have to check the maximum funds that can be expended for lodging using the US General Services Administration website: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>.

If the hotel/lodging is at the same place as the conference, seminar, or workshop, the total amount of the hotel/lodging will be allowed upon approval by the Executive Director and Director of Operations.

If the hotel/lodging is not at the place or not provided by the conference, seminar, or workshop, the staff has to indicate it on the Travel Authorization Form and get approved by the Executive Director and Director of Operations.

For staff members who live more than 50 miles from the Midlands STEM Charter School office, overnight lodging related to job duties must receive prior written permission from the Director of Operations and the Executive Director. The lodging will be approved on a case-by-case basis. The approval will be based in whole or in part on the employee's well-being, safety and to maximize the staff time in the service of Midlands STEM Charter School.

TRAVEL EXPENSES (POST TRIP REIMBURSEMENTS):

Per Diem

Per diems will be permitted as follows if the itinerary does not state that meals will be included in the registration fee.

MEALS	DEPART BEFORE	RETU RN AFTER	IN-STATE	OUT-OF STATE
Breakfast	6:30AM	11:00AM	\$8.00	\$10.00
Lunch	11:00AM	1:30PM	\$10.00	\$15.00
Dinner	5:15PM	8:30PM	\$17.00	\$25.00
MAXIMUM DAILY ALLOWANCE			\$35.00	\$50.00

Mileage Reimbursement

The Midlands STEM Charter School will reimburse for mileage when the travel exceeds 50 miles round trip. Mileage will not be reimbursed for staff members traveling within 50 miles roundtrip in the ordinary conduct of their job duties. Only employees that receive a waiver for 50 miles can seek reimbursements less than 50 miles round trip.

Mileage will not be reimbursed for employees traveling to the Columbia office regardless of their home location.

Reimbursement for mileage will be allowed for the use of an employee's personal vehicle while on an approved Institute business. The travel reimbursement rate is subject to the GSA rate. The mileage rate may be reviewed yearly, and updates may be made when needed.

For employees attending a one day or multi-day conferences/workshops, mileage will not be reimbursed for driving from a hotel to the conference or travel to get meals, unless approved in writing by the School Leader.

Staff members who are required to work after 5:00 pm to attend a scheduled meeting for the Midlands STEM Charter School, visit schools to attend school board meetings and other school events after their regular work hours from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, can seek reimbursements for an in-state per diem meal. The staff must provide the agenda/program or the meeting invitation along with the approval of the School Leaders to seek reimbursement. Federal funds will not be used for these expenses.

When possible, staff members are expected to travel in a group when multiple members are traveling to the same destination.

The staff is recommended to use a car rental service for any travel more than 130 miles round trip. Round trip calculation is per day. For example, a three-day conference in Myrtle Beach (300 miles round trip from Columbia) would not be eligible for a car rental as the total distance traveled is less than 390 miles (130 miles per day x 3 days).

Enterprise Car Rental Information ACCOUNT NUMBER: _____

ACCOUNT: Midlands STEM Charter School

Traveling Covered By Federal Funds

Staff members traveling on federal program projects will follow the same Institute mileage policy in addition to the below:

- If expenses will be paid by federal funds for lodging, the staff has to check the maximum funds that can be expended for lodging using the US General Services Administration website: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>.

If the hotel/lodging is at the same place as the conference, seminar, or workshop, the total amount of the hotel/lodging will be allowed upon approval by the Federal Programs and Finance Office.

If the hotel/lodging is not at the same place the conference, seminar, or workshop, the staff must to indicate it on the Travel Authorization Form and get approved from the Federal Programs and Finance Office.

Driving in Lieu of Airline Travel

When the most economical means of transportation is an airline flight and the employee elects to travel by personal vehicle, mileage reimbursement will not exceed the price of airfare, taxes and fees for a round-trip coach ticket at the time of completing the Pre-Authorization Request. Staff member must provide the documentation that shows the cost of the airfare at the time of request.

Family/Friends Accompanying Employee

If an employee will be accompanied by family or friends on an authorized business trip, only the authorized expenses directly attributed to the employee will be reimbursed.

Documentation of Expenses

Employees must provide documentation for the following expenses:

- Program/Agenda of the meeting
- Pre-Authorization Form
- Midlands STEM Charter School Expense Reimbursement Form
 - Signed by the immediate supervisor
 - As applicable signed by respective federal programs contact
 - Signed by the School Leader
- Travel map summary to show the number of miles
- Receipts
 - Hotel/Motel Receipt with “-0-” balance
 - Registration receipt
 - Parking receipts
 - Boat or Train fare receipt
 - Air Transportation receipt
 - Toll receipts

- Bus ticket
- Taxi/ride-share receipt
- Rental car receipt and gas receipt for the rental

Prohibited Reimbursements

Employees will not be reimbursed for the following expenses:

- Entertainment Expenses (i.e. in-room movies)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tobacco Products

Midlands STEM Charter School Credit Card Usage During Travel

Allowable expenses that may be made with the Midlands STEM Charter School Credit Card includes gas for the rental car, baggage fees, transportation, and preapproved transaction(s). Food, alcohol beverage, tobacco products, and luxury accommodations unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of the travel are not considered acceptable or allowable. All receipts for transactions made with the credit card during the travel must be submitted along with the expense reimbursement form with appropriate signatures to the Finance Office upon returning from the trip.

Staff Reimbursement Process

- The employee is responsible to complete the Expense Reimbursement Form within 10 business days from the date of purchase.
- The employee will submit the completed reimbursement form to the Director of Operations ▪
The Director of Operations will verify the information on the form
- The Director of Operations will collect signatures on the verified expense reimbursement forms from the Executive Director and Director of Operations.
- The fiscal coordinator will submit the approved expense reimbursement form to the Finance Office for payment.
- Under SC Law Act 123, the maximum reimbursement for any single purchase is \$250.00.

Approved 09/28/26