

## **CSTE TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICY**

### **Purpose**

CSTE appreciates the efforts of those who travel for the organization. Travelers should be comfortable while traveling, understand all travel related policies, and obtain reimbursement quickly. At the same time, it is necessary to keep costs within reasonable limits and to follow consistent reimbursement procedures. Expenses not specifically addressed in these guidelines must be approved by the CSTE National Office prior to incurring the expense. CSTE reserves the right to deny expenses exceeding reasonable or allowable costs as deemed appropriate by CSTE.

The travel policy meets the IRS definition of an “accountable plan”; therefore your travel reimbursement will not be reported as income. A complete expense reimbursement form accompanied by receipts substantiating the amount, time and business purpose of your expenses is required within 30 days of trip completion.

### **Air Travel**

Travelers are expected to book the lowest-priced, coach class airfare available of any airline available that is within two hours of (prior to or after) desired flight time; the use of an alternative airport serving the destination city; and/or the use of multiple stop flights that may include layovers. Travelers choosing an airline for its amenities or frequent flyer programs will be responsible for the difference in cost. Although at the present time CSTE awards the benefits of frequent flyer clubs and hotel programs to its travelers, it reserves the right to change this policy. CSTE will not reimburse travelers for tickets purchased with frequent flyer miles.

Business and first class domestic travel will not be reimbursed unless the Executive Director has a letter explaining the medical reasons or extenuating circumstances that require such service in advance of ticket purchase. Documentation of approval is required with expense reimbursement form.

### *Airline Reservations*

American Express Travel is the official travel agent for CSTE. In order to reserve the lowest ticketed price, reservations must be made no later than three weeks prior to your arrival date provided notification of travel is within this timeframe or as soon as notification is made. Reservations not made within a reasonable time period are subject to a fare differential that may be the responsibility of the traveler.

Travelers booking flights independent of the official travel agent must be approved by the CSTE National Office prior to incurring the expense by providing a comparative chart of the airfares, such as on a “Booking Buddy”. Please see [www.bookingbuddy.com](http://www.bookingbuddy.com). Documentation of approval and comparative chart is required with expense reimbursement form.

### *Upgrades for Domestic Air Travel*

- An upgrade at the expense of CSTE is not permitted.
- A free upgrade or an upgrade at the expense of the traveler must be noted as such on the expense reimbursement form.

### *Sponsored Project Domestic Travel*

Federally funded trips must be traveled on U.S. carriers at coach rates. Airfare costs in excess of the lowest available commercial discount airfare or customary standard (coach or equivalent) airfare on a U.S. carrier are not allowed except when such accommodations would:

- Require circuitous routing;
- Require travel during unreasonable hours;
- Excessively prolong travel;
- Result in increased costs that would offset transportation savings; and
- Be inadequate for the medical needs of the traveler.

For the complete federal travel regulations please refer to OMB Circular A-21.

Sponsored project travel should adhere to the guidelines set forth by this policy unless the sponsor imposes greater restrictions.

### *Cancellations/Changes*

CSTE will not pay for airline change fees unless the changes are due to an emergency or approved by the CSTE National Office prior to incurring the expense. Documentation of approval is required with the expense reimbursement form.

- When a trip is cancelled after the ticket has been issued, the travelers should inquire about using the same ticket for future travel.
- Travelers can reuse airline tickets for future CSTE travel if airfare eligibility requirements are met. These requirements should be verified with the issuing ticketing agency.
- Unused airline tickets or flight coupons have a cash value and therefore must not be discarded or destroyed.
- To expedite refunds, unused or partially used airline tickets must be returned immediately to the travel agency that issued the ticket.
- Unused tickets must not be sent to the airline unless they were issued directly from the airline. Contact the airline for their return procedures and requirements.
- Travelers should not include unused tickets with their Expense reports.

### *Luggage Fees*

CSTE will reimburse for one checked bag on travel requiring less than a one week stay. For travel requiring more than a one week stay, reimbursement fees for a second checked bag is allowed. No other luggage expenses will be reimbursed to travelers.

### *Parking Fees*

CSTE will reimburse parking expenses for the dates of approved travel and in an economy parking lot. No other parking expenses or fees in excess of economy parking will be reimbursed to travelers.

### **Lodging**

- Travelers must stay in a standard room at a non-luxury hotel, unless CSTE has negotiated a rate with a particular luxury hotel.
- Per night room costs should not exceed the most expensive rate listed in the federal rate for that city without prior authorization. Please see [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) for an up-to-date listing of federal lodging rates, as part of per diem.
- When available, travelers should request the hotel's government rate.
- Many hotels have frequent guest programs that reward travelers with free accommodations in exchange for a specified number of paid room nights at a hotel. CSTE will not reimburse travelers for the value of free accommodations used for business travel.
- Suites and concierge-level rooms are not reimbursed, unless CSTE has negotiated for these rooms at no additional costs. A free upgrade must be noted on expense reimbursement form.
- For your safety and security, always investigate security measures for your hotel room (e.g. door locks, fire exits, and alarm systems) and ensure it is a fire safe facility, see <http://apps.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/>.

### *Conference Reservations*

- When traveling to a conference, it is appropriate to stay at one of the hotels hosting the conference at the conference lodging rate even if the rate exceeds the most expensive hotel listed in the federal per diem guidelines. When available, travelers should request the hotel's government rate.
- If there are several conference hotels, travelers should stay at a non-luxury property.

### *Hotel Upgrades*

- An upgrade at the expense of CSTE is only permitted if the upgraded room rate does not exceed the highest rate listed in the federal per diem listing for that city and there is a preapproved business reason for the upgrade. Documentation of approval is required with expense reimbursement form, unless CSTE has negotiated for these rooms at no additional costs.

### *Cancellations*

- It is the traveler's responsibility to notify either the hotel or the agency with which reservation was made to cancel room reservations.
- Cancellation deadlines are based on the local time at the destination hotel.

- Travelers should request and record the cancellation number in case of billing disputes. CSTE will assist the traveler with any billing dispute on reservations they have made.
- Travelers will not be reimbursed for “no show” charges.

#### *Hotel Personal Expenses*

Personal expenses incurred while traveling will not be reimbursed.

#### **Meal Expenses**

Travelers are given per diem to cover lodging, meals and incidental expenses in connection with the performance of service to CSTE. Please refer to the following website for a complete, up-to-date listing of per diem rates [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov). Travelers who use per diem allowances do not have to substantiate each meal expense, but they must demonstrate that the trip occurred with a receipt, such as an airline ticket or hotel folio, that indicates the dates of travel. For audit purposes this documentation must be attached to the expense report.

The federal per diem for meals will be awarded for the destination of the trip. The daily per diem must be accounted for on the travel reimbursement less meals provided by your travel destination or host, and partial day travel.

Per diem allowances may not be issued in lieu of service payments such as consulting fees or honoraria.

#### **Ground Transportation**

Taxis, shuttle services and local public transportation are encouraged for travel to and from airports. CSTE will only reimburse for ground transportation expenses to and from airports. Ground transportation fees within a venue city are not reimbursable unless the traveler receives prior approval from CSTE. Documentation of approval is required with expense reimbursement form.

#### *Rental Cars*

Rental car expenses are not reimbursable unless the traveler receives prior approval from CSTE. Documentation of approval is required with expense reimbursement form.

#### *Personal Automobile*

Mileage will be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS per-mile rate for business use of personal automobile. Other automobile expenses such as gas, oil, tires, and so on are not reimbursable expenses.

Prior approval of use of personal automobiles for 600 miles (roundtrip) or less is not required. Automobile use exceeding 600 miles (roundtrip) must be preapproved by CSTE and reimbursement cannot exceed the total cost of the most economical roundtrip airfare. Travelers must provide a comparative chart of the airfares, such as a “Booking

Buddy” with the request. Travelers are required to submit documentation of approval and comparative chart with their completed expense reimbursement form.

### **Telephone Usage**

Travelers will not be reimbursed for phone calls. Travelers requesting reimbursement for internet use must request approval before travel occurs. Documentation of approval is required with expense reimbursement form.

### **Expense Reporting**

- CSTE requires that travelers file an expense report within 30 days of trip completion. Expense reports filed after 60 days will not be paid unless approved by the Executive Director for reasonable cause.
- The expense report must include a date and the traveler’s signature.
- Documentation should include receipts, name of the vendor, location, date, and dollar amount. In addition, the following must be included:
  1. air/rail ticket receipt
  2. hotel folio
  3. receipts for tolls and parking if costs exceed \$50.99
- Electronic and fax copies can be accepted.

#### *Incorrect or Incomplete Expense Reports*

Expense reports that are incorrect or incomplete will be returned to the traveler for corrective action and will result in delay of reimbursement. Most frequent reasons for returned expense reports include missing traveler’s signature and missing receipts.

A correction and/or change to the expense report as a result of an accounting audit of the report will be documented with a correction note. For errors in arithmetic and disallowed items, a correction note denoting the errors will be sent to the traveler and an appropriate adjustment made to the reimbursement.

#### *Reimbursement*

Reimbursement will be mailed within 30 working days of receipt of a complete expense report by the CSTE accounting department. Additional time should be allowed for mail delivery. Checks will be sent to the address provided on expense reimbursement form.