

**Erie County Industrial Development Agency (“ECIDA”),  
Buffalo and Erie County Regional Development Corporation  
 (“RDC”), Buffalo and Erie County Industrial Land  
Development Corporation (“ILDC”)**

***Travel, Conferences, Meals and Entertainment Policy***

***Objective:***

The purpose of this Travel, Conferences, Meals and Entertainment Policy (Policy) is to outline the policies and procedures the Erie County Industrial Development Agency and its affiliates will follow with respect to these and other related expenditures in accordance with Section 2824 of the Public Authorities Accountability Act of 2005.

***Applicability:***

This policy shall apply to the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (“ECIDA”) and its affiliated corporations: Buffalo and Erie County Regional Development Corporation (“RDC”), Buffalo and Erie County Industrial Land Development Corporation (“ILDC”), , and any other affiliated entities that may be established by the ECIDA (hereinafter collectively referred to as the “Agency”) upon approval by the respective Boards of Directors and Members of the Agency. This policy shall apply to every director, member, officer and employee of the Agency.

***General Guidelines:***

It is the Agency’s general policy to pay reasonable and necessary travel, conferences, meals and entertainment expenses incurred as a result of official business subject to the presentation of appropriate documentation.

Any exceptions or potential exceptions to this Policy must be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”; or in the case of the CEO to the Board Chair<sup>1</sup>) for approval.

***Section 1: Travel***

***1.1 Approval of Travel:***

Travel involving overnight accommodation or travel outside of Western New York and Southern Ontario requires the approval of the CEO (or the Board Chair in the case of the CEO).

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<sup>1</sup> If the Board Chair benefited from the expenditure then the Audit Committee Chair will approve the exception. If both the Board Chair and Audit Committee Chair benefited from the expenditure then the full Board of the Agency must approve the exception.

## **1.2 Personal Travel:**

Personal Travel is **not** reimbursable. This exclusion applies to personal travel which interrupts official travel, or precedes or follows a business trip.

Personal expenses are not reimbursable even when incurred while on an Agency trip. Examples of such excluded expenses are pet care, house, or child-care expenses and purchase or repair of personal luggage.

## **1.3 Reimbursable Travel Expenses:**

Where practical, employees should perform appropriate due diligence to obtain the lowest reasonable costs for travel expenses.

Transportation expenses shall be reimbursed based on an economical mode of transportation and the most commonly traveled route consistent with the authorized purpose of the trip.

Transportation tickets should be procured in advance in order to obtain any discounts offered by the carrier. Every reasonable effort should be made to cancel reservations on a timely basis to avoid no-show or late cancellation charges.

### **A. Automobile Travel**

#### **i) Personal Vehicle**

Travelers may use their personal vehicle for business purposes if it is less expensive than renting a car, taking a taxi, or using alternative transportation, or if it saves time.

In most circumstances, mileage shall be computed as the distance traveled to the business destination. Mileage will be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS mileage rate reimbursement limits which are intended to cover the cost of fuel, depreciation, insurance, maintenance and other similar operating costs. Expenses related to the mechanical failure or accidents to personal cars are not reimbursable.

When utilizing a personal vehicle for business, travelers must maintain liability insurance on the vehicle in accordance with New York State requirements. The Agency may periodically request proof of insurance from such travelers.

#### **ii) Rental Cars**

A vehicle may be rented when renting would be more advantageous to the Agency than other means of commercial transportation, such as using a taxi. Advance reservations should be made whenever possible and a compact or economy model requested unless the itinerary, number of travelers or baggage support the choice of a larger vehicle. The traveler is responsible for obtaining the best available rate commensurate with the requirements of the trip. When the traveler uses a rental car also for a personal side trip, he or she is expected to pay the appropriate portion of both the per-diem and the mileage expense.

The Agency's insurance company currently provides liability and physical damage coverage if a vehicle is rented in the Agency's name in the U.S. or Canada. Therefore, if

similar coverage is offered by the rental company, it should be declined in these circumstances.

**iii) Miscellaneous Automobile-related Expenses**

Charges for parking, ferries, bridges, tunnels, or toll roads while an individual is traveling on Agency business will be reimbursed.

***B. Air Travel***

Whenever practicable, travelers are expected to use tourist, economy, coach or "standard" accommodations for air travel. The Agency discourages more than three employees traveling on the same flight.

Travelers may retain Agency business frequent flyer mileage credits for personal use. However, air carrier selection cannot be biased by the traveler's frequent flyer affiliation. The lowest cost air travel should take precedence after considering departure/arrival times and number of stops.

**C. Surface Transportation Used in Lieu of Air Travel**

If advance approval has been obtained, a traveler may use surface transportation for personal reasons even though air travel is the appropriate mode of transportation. The cost of meals and lodging, parking, mileage, tolls, taxis, and ferries incurred while in transit by surface transportation may be reimbursed. Such costs shall not exceed the cost of airfare, based on the cost of regular coach fare available for the location of travel from a standard commercial air carrier plus transportation costs to and from the airport.

***D. Other Forms of Transportation***

Rail, shuttle, subway or bus transportation may be used if it is convenient and less expensive than alternative transportation or it saves time. If a traveler's destination is served by a regularly scheduled airline, the use of rail or bus transportation shall be reimbursed in accordance with the procedures specified under Surface Transportation in Lieu of Air Travel.

**E. Food and Lodging**

Lodging, meals, gratuities and related miscellaneous expenses while an individual is on travel status for the Agency will be reimbursed in their actual, reasonable amounts when properly documented. Gratuities should generally not exceed 20% of the total bill and are reimbursable if a restaurant receipt is submitted. Generally, hotel housekeeping gratuities are reimbursable up to \$5 per day. Accommodations are expected to be comfortable and appropriate to the particular purpose of the trip-not luxurious or extravagant. Wherever possible, the Agency's New York State sales tax exemption should be claimed. Tax exemption letters are available from the Finance Department.

## **F. Miscellaneous Travel Expenses**

Examples of miscellaneous travel expenses **that are reimbursable** are the following:

- Reasonable tips for baggage handling, etc.
- Business telephone or internet calls and occasional, reasonable personal calls.
- Highway and bridge tolls.
- Necessary parking fees.
- Small supplies on an emergency basis
- Fees for visas, passports, and inoculations are allowable when they are a specific and necessary condition of fulfilling a work assignment.
- Cab gratuities, generally not exceeding 20% of the total cost of the cab ride.

## **G. Travel Expenses Not Reimbursed**

Expenses that **are not reimbursable** include:

- Lost or stolen tickets, cash, or personal property.
- Fines.
- Accident insurance premiums (the Agency provides workers compensation and accidental death and disability insurance to employees).
- Child, pet or house-sitting expenses.
- Penalties or fees for cancellation or change of discounted tickets when the cancellation or change came about from personal rather than Agency choice.
- In-room movie or video game rentals.
- Hotel mini-bar charges.
- Dry cleaning (unless the Agency requests that the traveler extends their regularly scheduled trip or when the traveler is away from home for more than six days).
- All costs pertaining to spouses, partners or other non-Agency personnel accompanying the traveler
- Tobacco products

The above listings are not all-inclusive and items not listed will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

## **Section 2: Conferences and Seminars**

Reimbursement of conference and seminar fees and related hotel and meal expenses will be limited to those reasonable, necessary, approved expenses which are reported in an Expense Report with supporting receipts or documentation. The Agency will only reimburse reasonable meal and beverage expenses of guests when the purpose of the meeting is to discuss Agency business. If this is the case, the Agency requires that the traveler provide a listing of the guests whose costs are being reimbursed, their organization and title and the business purpose of the meeting.

If a conference registration fee includes an extra charge for social activities, such as site-seeing tours, golf outings, etc., these charges are considered personal expenses and will not be reimbursed.

### **Section 3: Dues of Professional or Technical Organizations**

Dues for approved memberships in professional or technical organizations are reimbursable when they are related to the employee's job responsibilities.

### **Section 4: Meals & Entertainment**

There are occasions when the Agency may provide meals and light refreshments to Board or committee members, officers, employees, guests or visitors to support the mission of the Agency. As with other Agency expenditures, authorized officials must exercise prudent business judgment in reviewing proposed expenditures for meals and light refreshments based on their reasonableness and benefit to the Agency and its mission of promoting general economic development in Erie County. In addition, such expenditures should be cost effective and in accordance with the best use of Agency administered funds.

Meals and entertainment costs of a spouse or partner will only be reimbursed if their presence serves a business purpose (such as if he or she has a significant role in the proceedings or makes an important contribution to the success of the event). Official functions to which spouses or partners are invited as a matter of protocol or tradition may be considered as bona fide business-related activities if their inclusion serves a legitimate business purpose.

#### **4.1 Employee morale-building activities Exception**

The cost of meals, light refreshments and entertainment for official employee morale-building activities that serve an Agency business purpose may be reimbursed as an exception to this Policy. Examples of such occasions include a gathering to honor a departing employee who is retiring or who is separating from Agency employment, employee recognition receptions, annual staff picnics, and holiday gatherings. Employee gifts and/or celebrations for milestone anniversaries (ex. 10, 15, 20, 25, etc.) are also allowed. Celebrations and/or cakes for employee birthdays or for Agency interns are not reimbursable.

#### **4.2 Entertainment Expenses Not Reimbursed**

Expenses that **are not reimbursable** include:

- Entertainment expenses that are lavish or extravagant under the circumstances;
- Entertainment expenses for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, or farewell gatherings (excluding the morale-building expenses referenced in section 4.1 above).

- Memberships/dues for private clubs, unless such membership is determined by the Board and/or Members to be appropriate for the conduct of Agency business in accordance with its corporate purposes.
- Adult entertainment

## **Section 5: Advances**

Cash advances are not generally provided because individuals who travel regularly on Agency business are encouraged to use their personal credit cards to charge their travel expenses.

If hardship would result or for travelers without a personal credit card, cash advances can be obtained from the Finance department. To obtain an advance, the traveler must complete a "Request for Cash Advance" form which must be approved by both the CFO and CEO (or CFO and the Chair of the Audit Committee in the case of the CEO). Any excess of cash advances over allowable out-of-pocket costs must be promptly refunded to the Agency.

## **Section 6: Reimbursement Approval**

Reimbursement may be requested as soon as the individual has made the expenditure, completed their Expense Report and had it approved. Expense Reports must be approved by the individual's Division Manager or the CEO (or Chair of the Audit Committee in the case of the CEO). The individual approving the Expense Report should not have personally benefited from the expenditure. If the Agency Chairperson benefited from the expenditure then the Audit Committee Chair must approve the Expense Report. If both the Agency Chairperson and the Audit Committee Chair benefited from the expenditure then the Board or Members of the Agency must approve the Expense Report.

In approving a request to reimburse an individual for expenditures authorized under this Policy, the approving authority must determine that:

- The expenditure serves a clear and necessary business purpose of benefit to the Agency and its mission of promoting general economic development in Erie County;
- The expenditure of funds is reasonable, cost effective, and in accordance with the best use of Agency administered funds;
- Any alternatives that would have been equally effective in accomplishing the desired objectives were considered.

Individuals may not approve the reimbursement of their own expenses. In addition, an employee shall not approve the expenses of an individual to whom he or she reports either directly or indirectly.

Original, dated receipts or bills are required for hotel, car rental and airline expenditures and for any other item of expense exceeding \$25. Other out-of-pocket

expenses should be listed by date, type, and purpose on the traveler's Expense Report.

If a required receipt is lost or unavailable, a written explanation of the circumstances must accompany the reimbursement request.

### **6.1 Expenses Charged directly to the Agency**

Certain expenses may be paid directly by the Agency through check, ACH or other direct payment methods. Examples include such items as airline tickets, rental cars, accommodation and seminar registration fees. The fact that certain allowable business expenses may be paid directly by the Agency does not relieve a traveler from complying with the substantiation requirements of this Policy (original receipts, airline tickets and other supporting documentation must be attached and details provided regarding any guest costs).

Fees for membership in credit card reward programs where the beneficiary of the rewards is the individual are not reimbursable.

## **Section 7: Expenses in Foreign Currency**

For expenses paid in foreign cash, the exchange rate at which the traveler bought the foreign currency applies, and a receipt for the purchase of that currency should be kept and attached to the Expense Report.

## **Section 8: Taxability of Reimbursements**

In general, where the individual supplies a detailed accounting of bona fide business expenses to the employer, the amounts reimbursed are not taxable income to the traveler. It is therefore in the traveler's interest to carefully follow the Agency's procedures for reporting and documenting expenses.

## **Section 9: Policy Exceptions**

On rare occasions, exceptions to this policy may be required. Exceptions may only be made with prior written approval by the ECIDA Board Chair or Vice Chair.

## **Attachments**

Agency Expense Report  
Agency Tax exemption letter  
Agency Cash Advance Form

Re-adopted by the respective Boards of Directors on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of March 2021.