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TRAVEL

Applicability

The provisions of this policy shall apply to all MBCG officers--whether elected or appointed—as well as to all MBCG employees and to those acting as authorized representatives of MBCG, Georgia.

Authorized Travel and Expenses

Travel and related expenses shall be authorized when an officer or employee is engaged in the conduct of official MBCG business, which shall include the following:

1. Travel to and from the location of a conference, seminar, school or training program which is held either inside or outside the territorial limits of Bibb County and which enhances an officers or employees ability to complete his/her functions or duties.
2. Travel to and from any location to conduct operations of the MBCG.
3. Travel to and from any location for the purpose of extraditing or transporting a prisoner as may be required by the courts.

Travel Request, Approval and Reporting

All travel by department personnel requires prior approval of the department head or designee. It is, therefore, the department head's responsibility to remain within the travel allocation of the budget.

Travel Advances

A travel advance for travel related expenses may be made by written request on such forms as may be prescribed by the Finance Department. Such request should be made no less than five (5) working days prior to the date the advance will be needed. Travelers who fail to submit the advance request in sufficient time to receive an advance will be responsible for travel expenses and will be reimbursed after the travel event has been completed. Travel advance payments will be made in the form of a

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check and will not be available before two (2) working days prior to the scheduled date of departure. No advance will be made for less than \$25.00. For reimbursement of travel expenses of less than \$25.00, the traveler must submit a travel expense report after the travel event has been completed.

Registration, lodging and transportation payments

Registration fees and fares for common carrier transportation will be paid in advance by the Finance Department by check made payable to the vendor providing the service. The employee shall be responsible for submitting the request for payment (along with the registration form, invoice or bill) in sufficient time for the payment to be processed and mailed prior to any deadline. Whenever possible, lodging accommodations should be paid for in advance in the same manner as registration fees and fares for common carrier transportation.

Reimbursement of expenses and final settlement of advances

If the sum advanced to a traveler exceeds actual reimbursable expenses, the traveler shall reimburse the excess to the MBCG Cash Manager in the Finance Department. If the amount advanced was not sufficient to cover the reimbursable expenses or in cases where the traveler used personal funds to pay travel expenses, a voucher will be processed to cover the difference. Reimbursement will be issued within four (4) working days of the receipt of an accurately completed and approved request for reimbursement.

A request for reimbursement of expenses and settlement of advances shall be submitted to the Finance Department within 72 hours following the date of the employee or officer's return to work. Such request and settlements shall be made on such forms as prescribed by the Finance Department. The forms must be signed by the employee's department head.

If a request for reimbursement of expenses is not filed within ten (10) calendar days following the date of the employee or officer's return to work, the Finance Director shall be authorized to void the reimbursement claim.

Should a report for final settlement of advances not be filed within then (10) calendar days following the date of the employee or officer's return to work, the employee's

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name will be placed on a list which makes the employee ineligible for future advances. When the reports are submitted, the employee's name will be removed from the list and they will then be eligible for future advances. Should a final settlement of advances not be filed within fifteen (15) calendar days following the date of the employee or officer's return to work, the Finance Director shall be authorized to withhold any such cash advance or direct payment from the employee's paycheck. Any expenses incurred over and above the advance will not be reimbursed after this period.

Documentation of Expenses

Receipts or other documentation shall be required for all expenses with the exception of the following: meals, toll charges and tips.

Allowable transportation expenses:

- Common carrier

A common carrier shall be any scheduled airline, train, or bus and the authorized rate shall be limited to the minimum fare available (economy or tourist). Reservations should be made far enough in advance to permit procurement of proper reservations and to take advantage of any special saving plans offered by the carrier.

- Travel by Auto

A traveler driving either a private auto (including rental vehicles) or a MBCG-owned auto must possess a current valid Georgia driver's license. Travelers using privately owned vehicles must provide, at their expense, collision and liability insurance in at least the statutory minimum insuring themselves, their passengers, and others in the use of their private auto while on MBCG business.

When more than one MBCG official and/or employee is attending an event, separate vehicle allowances will not be approved if one vehicle is sufficient for transportation, unless separate arrival and departure times are required by other MBCG business or approved by the department head. Thorough documentation of the circumstances requiring deviation from this policy must be submitted with the request for reimbursement.

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Travelers will be reimbursed for actual cost of incidental expenses incurred in the use of private, rental or MBCG-owned vehicles such as parking fees, bridge and toll road fees, etc.

- **MBCG-owned Vehicle**

If the department for which the traveler works is assigned a MBCG-owned vehicle, the traveler should, if at all possible, use the MBCG-owned auto rather than his personal vehicle.

If a MBCG-owned vehicle is used, the traveler will not be reimbursed for mileage, but will be reimbursed for the actual cost of purchased gasoline and oil. In addition, small emergency repair expenses such as flat tire, battery charges, fan belt replacement, etc. will be reimbursed, provided that appropriate receipts are furnished. Automotive breakdowns requiring repairs in excess of \$200 should be reported to the appropriate department head for instructions.

- **Personal Auto**

The use of private autos or rental vehicles for MBCG business will be reimbursed at the current IRS rate. Reimbursable travel expenses do not include trips from the traveler's place of residence to a MBCG building or visa-versa. Travelers electing to use a private auto in lieu of travel by common carrier, where common carrier is practical, will be reimbursed the vehicle mileage expense or the amount of Economy Air Fare, whichever is less. Travelers who elect to use a rental vehicle in lieu of travel by common carrier, where common carrier is practical, will be reimbursed at the cost of the auto rental, not including mileage expense, or the amount of Economy Air Fare, whichever is less.

- **Ground Transportation**

Ground transportation by taxi, bus, or limousine is an allowable expense when actually incurred in conjunction with common carrier transportation to and from terminals, hotels, restaurants, and meeting locations, if necessary. The most economical means of grounds transportation should always be used.

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- Points of Departure and Return

The points of departure and return for travel status shall be either the office at

which the employee carries out his/her duties or his/her residence; whichever is more practical under the circumstances. All travel should be by the most direct

route. However, an expressway route which involves more total mileage may result in savings in personnel time and therefore would be considered the more direct route in most circumstances. Travel to restaurants and other locations after reaching the initial destination should be kept to a minimum. Reason and good judgment should be exercised in this determination. It will be the responsibility of the department head to monitor the reasonableness of mileage reimbursement request.

- Lodging

When lodging accommodations are not available at the conference or class site, travelers should choose the most reasonably convenient and economical hotel accommodations possible. Travelers requiring overnight accommodations should inquire about the hotel's government rate. The rate is usually lower than special conference or group rates, and always less than regular rates.

When traveling within the State of Georgia, officials and/or employees can exempt both sales and local hotel/motel excise tax. When reserving accommodations, please inform the hotel staff that the accommodations will be paid for by MBCG so that they can accurately calculate the charges if an advance payment is to be made. Also, inquire as to whether the forms necessary to obtain this exemption should be sent with the advance payment or presented at the time of check-in. If the forms are to be sent with the payment, it shall be the responsibility of the traveler to attach these forms to the payment request. Forms may be obtained from the Finance Department.

Reimbursement for lodging will cover only those nights during which an event occurs. If an employee arrives early or leaves late from an event, the MBCG will not pay for extra nights of lodging accommodation. However, if travel and event schedules require that an employee arrive the evening before or leave the morning after an event, the MBCG will pay for reasonable extra accommodations.

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Travelers sharing a room with a traveling companion (other than an authorized MBCG traveler) will be reimbursed for the single occupancy rate.

Travelers requesting additional amenities including, but not limited to, suites, kitchenettes or a fireplace will be reimbursed for the standard single room rate. Travelers must pay for additional amenities.

- Meals

Travelers are allowed a per diem meal allowance while traveling on MBCG business. The per diem allowance is based on the IRS Standard Meal Allowance and varies depending on the particular city to which the official or employee is traveling. The per diem rate for the city to which you are traveling may be obtained from the department head or from the Finance Department.

The following breakdown will apply for partial days of travel:

Breakfast

20% of the daily per diem allowance when travel begins prior to or at 7:00 a.m. and extends to 9:00 a.m. or beyond.

Lunch

30% of the daily per diem allowance when travel begins prior to or at 12:00 noon and extends to 2:00 p.m. or beyond.

Dinner

50% of the daily per diem allowance when travel begins prior to or at 5:00 p.m. and extends to 7:00 p.m. or beyond

Tips are included as part of the daily per diem allowance and will not be reimbursed as a separate expense.

- Meals Within Bibb County

Expenses associated with meals for officials and/or employees occurring within the territorial limits of Bibb County may be reimbursed if one or more of the following conditions are met:

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- A. The official and/or employee attended a seminar or conference at which the meal is an integral part of the seminar;
- B. The official and/or employee must participate in a meeting with an out-of-Bibb County individual or group whose principal purpose in Bibb County is to conduct business with the MBCG. Extreme discretion should be used in spending travel funds for this purpose;
- C. There is a meeting involving an elected official who is devoting his/her time to conducting MBCG business.

The meal cost reimbursement for the above circumstances will not exceed the IRS per diem allowance rate for MBCG in effect at that time.

- Registration Fees

Registration fees in connection with an authorized conference or training class shall be an allowable expense and payment shall be made by the Finance Department. The employee shall be responsible for submitting the request for payment, along with the registration form, in sufficient time for payment to be processed and mailed prior to any registration deadline. The MBCG will issue a check payable as directed by the sponsor of the conference or training class.

In unusual circumstances, travelers may take the check and deliver it at the time of the conference or pay the registration fee themselves and then request reimbursement on the travel expense form, if approved by the department head. Optional assessments such as special events or personal memberships which are charges in addition to the class or conference fees are not allowable expenses.

- Communications

Telephone and facsimile messages directly pertaining to official MBCG business shall be an allowable expense. Claims for payment of such charges shall be itemized and shall include location, the person contacted, and the justification for the communication. One personal call to confirm the safe

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arrival of the individual shall be an allowable expense. Expenses for all other personal calls will not be reimbursed.

- Tips and Gratuities

Tips and gratuities in conjunction with an authorized expense (other than meals) shall be allowable if they are determined to be reasonable by the Finance Director. The per diem meal allowance includes all tips and gratuities for meal expenses.

- Parking Fees

Expenses for parking shall be allowable if documented by paid receipt, except however, that no payment shall be made for charges in connection with any illegal parking violation.

- Credit Cards

Whenever allowable expenses are purchased or paid by the employee with a credit card, the receipt shall include an itemization of expenditures, or, in the alternative, a separate receipt must be obtained for each expense. A credit card receipt showing only an aggregate of charges, unless itemized, shall not constitute sufficient documentation and shall not be the basis for reimbursement of expenses.

- Spouses

Reimbursable expenses for spouses include any registration fee in cases when spouses are invited to and considered part of the function or when protocol requires the attendance of spouses. Meals for spouses and/or traveling companions are not reimbursable.

- Other Expenses

Upon justification, the Finance Committee of the County Commission may authorize reimbursement to officials and/or employees for expenses of the limitations prescribed in this policy where the Finance Committee finds that the expenses were reasonable and proper under the circumstances.

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- Unallowable Expenses

The following expenses are specifically unallowable for payment:

- o Expenses incurred by any person other than the official or employee unless otherwise provided for in this policy or prior written approval has been granted by the Finance Director.
- o Expenses for entertainment, including but not limited to in room movies and mini-bars.
- o Alcoholic beverages.
- o Laundry service.
- o Personal articles, toiletries, souvenirs, etc.
- o Direct expenses for operating a personal vehicle, such as gasoline, oil, parts or repairs.
- o Travel and related expenses incurred from an employee's residence to his designated work site.
- o Any expenses for per diem allowances not required to ensure the employee's performance of official MBCG business. Scheduling or extending travel periods in order to increase per diem allowances is specifically not allowable.
- o Any expenses incurred that are unrelated to official government business or activities as determined by the Finance Director.

- Distribution of Travel Policy

It is the responsibility of the department head and/or others approving travel for employees to ensure that the traveler reads and understands the travel policy prior to incurring any charges which he/she might expect to be reimbursed by MBCG.

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- Information and Forms

Employees and/or officials who have questions concerning this policy or the application of this policy should contact the MBCG Finance Department. The Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”) schedule of per diem rates by location for meal expenses, along with the MBCG Travel Advance Requisition Form and MBCG Travel Expense Requisition Form, can be found on the MBCG website, under the tab for Finance Department—Finance Forms.

- Final Authority

The County Manager has final authority for interpreting, applying, and considering any appeals from, this policy.