# General Information

GEAR UP related travel must be approved in the annual work plan and budget. In general, out of state travel is not allowable. However, the following exceptions may be requested:

1. AVID Summer Institute – For Summer 2020, AVID Conference in Seattle is allowable. See specific guidance if you opt to attend an out of state session.
2. GEAR UP West
3. National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP)
4. College visits to bordering states, Idaho and Oregon

The annual work plan and budget will include a line item specific to Washington State GEAR UP sponsored professional development. This includes the following activities:

1. GEAR UP West
2. Winter Workshop
3. Spring Workshop
4. Summer Workshop

The funds in this line item are for these activities exclusively, and may not be reassigned to other activities. Unspent funds will remain with Washington State GEAR UP.

## Traveling to GEAR UP Events

Prior to each GEAR UP sponsored professional development event, WSAC staff will send the information needed related to travel arrangements, including lodging reservation information, meals and any other guidance to ensure that staff members are prepared for the trip. Please watch for these emails.

## Travel Reimbursement Processes

In order to ensure smooth processing and reimbursement of GEAR UP related travel expenses, there are two important considerations:

1. District employees must follow the district’s rules and policies regarding travel allowances and reimbursement requirements. If your district reimburses less than GEAR UP allows, staff must be reimbursed at the district rate.
2. Washington Student Achievement Council (Council) GEAR UP can only reimburse for travel expenses (of any kind) up to the maximum allowed amount set by the Office of Financial Management (OFM). A map of the current per diem rates can be found at. <https://www.ofm.wa.gov/accounting/administrative-accounting-resources/travel>. The map is updated annually, each October.
3. If your district allows reimbursement rate that is higher reimbursement or reimburses meals that are not allowable per our guidelines, the district is responsible for reimbursing the employee at their expense. GEAR UP will only reimburse per the guidance below, and never above the state per diem rates. If your district has a higher than per diem policy, please provide a copy of the policy to WSAC GEAR UP.

All district employees need to claim travel expenses in the manner that their district requires while still providing GEAR UP with the necessary travel expense documentation required by the program for reimbursement. Staff members will submit a travel expense voucher and documentation to their school district to be reimbursed for travel expenses.

If a district credit card is used to pay travel expenses for any employee, then the receipts and an authorization form (sometimes called a p-card authorization) must be submitted. All information normally required for travel must be included: the purpose of the travel, departure and return times and the names of the staff who received the meals, and their signature is required.

Prior to all GEAR UP sponsored activities that require travel, including GEAR UP West, professional development workshops, summer camp and AVID Summer Institute, GEAR UP staff will provide a detail of allowable expenses related to that specific event. Staff members are expected to follow these guidelines and limits, without exception. If an exception is needed, then you must submit a request in writing to Buffy Hatcher, buffyh@wsac.wa.gov prior to the event for approval.

By following the guidelines below, this will ensure that your district is reimbursed for all GEAR UP related travel expenses.

# Meals

GEAR UP will reimburse for the cost of meals up to the maximum allowed amount set by the Office of Fiscal Management (OFM), as these are called “state meal per diem rates.” Again, if school districts reimburse employees for less than the allowed per diem, your district will only be reimbursed for that amount.

**Meal allowances (per diem) cover the following costs:**

1. The basic cost of the meal
2. Any applicable sales tax
3. Any customary tip or gratuity

For example, if the dinner per diem is $28, then that includes the cost of the food, sales tax and the tip.

**Note: If a hotel provides a hot breakfast, it is expected that the traveler will not claim per diem for this meal; the per diem will not be reimbursed. (Revised October 1, 2019.)**

## Adult Meals – Field Trips

Meal allowances for staff members, bus drivers or parent chaperones are reimbursable when attending and/or chaperoning a GEAR UP sponsored field trip with students. The following guidelines apply to adult meals on field trips:

* The school district’s travel rules must always be followed and should align with policy or practice for consistency.
* Adult meal allowances must follow one of the following methods:
	+ The adult completes a school district expense voucher, including departure and return times and is reimbursed per the school district’s travel rules, up to the state per diem. The adult receives the same meal allowance as the students, which is $10 per meal ($15 in King County) and $3 for a snack. The snack reimbursement for the adult is optional. The adult must initial the Student Cash Meal Allowance Form for each meal allowance received.
	+ The adult may opt to pay for their own meals to conserve resources for the program. In this case, the school would not be reimbursed for these expenses.
	+ If students are eating at a restaurant, college campus food service, or any other venue where the school is paying for all meals (in advance or at the time of purchase), the adult meals may also be included. The adult’s names must be provided on the invoice for reimbursement.

## Professional Development and Other Staff Travel Meals

Meal allowances for staff members are reimbursable when attending a professional development workshop that requires an overnight stay. For overnight travel assignments, all meals will be reimbursed at the rate in effect for the area where the traveler stops for sleep. The meal reimbursement rate for the last day of travel (return day) would continue to be the rate for the location where the traveler last stopped for sleep.

Attending a non-overnight professional development workshop typically does not qualify the staff member for a meal allowance. For non-overnight travel assignments, staff must be in travel status for 11 hours or more, as documented on the traveler’s expense voucher, in order to qualify to collect the meal payments for the meal(s).

## Qualifying Meal Periods

Travelers must be in travel status during the entire WSAC-determined meal period(s) in order to qualify for meal reimbursements. GEAR UP has established the following agency determined meal periods:

* **Breakfast:** 6:30-7:30 am
* **Lunch:** 12-1 pm
* **Dinner:** 4:30-5:30 pm
* If you leave prior to the established meal period then you are entitled to that meal unless it is provided and as long as your school district allows for that reimbursement. Staff members cannot extend travel just to qualify for a meal.
* **Note:** Districts may have established meal periods that differ from the above. In this case, you must follow the district policy and practice.

## Departure and Return Times

* Per state rules, travel expense vouchers must include departure and return times for all trips.
* Departure and return times are used to determine eligibility for meal reimbursement and without them we cannot reimburse for meals.
* Your **departure time** is recorded as the time you left either your home or place of work on the first day of the trip, whichever is later. If you did not go to your place of work on that day, then use the time you left your home.
* Your **return time** is the time you arrive back at your home or place of work on the final day of travel, whichever is earlier. If you do not return to your place of work on that day, then use the time you arrived at your home.
* If you do not provide departure and return on either the travel expense voucher or the Expenditure Detail Form, your district will not be reimbursed for any claimed meals.

## Meal Receipts

* If you claim per diem (state or district allowance, whichever is less) a meal receipt is not required – UNLESS it is required by your school district.
* If your district reimburses you based on the actual cost of the meal/receipt, not to exceed the state per diem, then GEAR UP requires a copy of your receipt.
* GEAR UP requires that all meal receipts be detailed. Credit card receipts are not detailed and therefore are not an acceptable form of documentation. Receipts must show what was purchased.
* When submitting meal receipts, if you are paying for your meal and another individual’s meal, you must request separate receipts showing only the cost of your meal.
* Meal receipts should be reasonable; if one person’s meal is on the receipt, it is expected that one meal be purchased.
* Alcohol is not an allowable expense, and must not be included on any receipt submitted.

## NOTE

* Staff members will not be reimbursed for meals if a meal was provided at the event. The only exception to this is if a continental breakfast is provided and only cold items were served, then you may request reimbursement for breakfast. If a hotel provides a hot breakfast as a part of your stay, it is considered a provided meal and will not be reimbursed.
* GEAR UP will only pay for the approved traveling staff member’s meal expenses even if combined meal costs for one approved traveler plus companion(s) does not exceed the allowed maximum amount.
* Incidentals, such as coffee, snacks, frozen yogurt or ice cream, dessert, purchased separate from a meal are not reimbursable.

# Transportation

## Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Mileage Rate

GEAR UP can reimburse for use of a district or personal vehicle up to the allowed maximum amount set by OFM, which is updated every January 1.

If your district reimburses at a lower rate, that is what will be reimbursed and should be requested from GEAR UP. If the amount per mile increases or decreases, GEAR UP staff will notify the school districts regarding the change.

## Carpooling

Staff members are expected to carpool to GEAR UP events. Transportation to GEAR UP events will be allowed one car per three staff members, maximum. Exceptions to this require pre-approval from the Associate Director.

## School District Vehicles

GEAR UP can reimburse for the use of other district vehicles (SUV, van or bus) up to the allowed maximum amount set by the school district but requires written verification of the cost per mile being claimed by the school district. GEAR UP may not be charged more than what other programs in the district are charged.

## Driver Costs – Field Trips

When a district vehicle, such as a bus is being used for transportation, GEAR UP will reimburse for driver time, benefits and mileage and requires written verification of these expenses, such as a transportation log or invoice.

## Tolls

GEAR UP will reimburse for bridge and ferry tolls and require detailed receipt(s). High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes will not be reimbursed.

## Rental Cars

GEAR UP will not reimburse for the use of a rental car except in rare instances. All rental cars must be pre-approved and prior to the funds being spent.

## Taxis or Shuttles

GEAR UP will reimburse taxi or shuttle expenses, including Uber and Lyft, to and from the airport while traveling for GEAR UP. A detailed receipt is required.

Taxis, trolleys or buses that are taken by staff members to dinner while attending a conference are considered a personal expense and are not allowable. Limousines or other options will not be reimbursed.

## Lodging

* GEAR UP can reimburse for lodging up to the maximum allowed amount set by OFM.
* Taxes and fees associated are not included in the OFM lodging rates and therefore are reimbursed in addition to the room rate.
* Internet access is not an allowable expense, as free Wi-Fi is usually available in the hotel lobby or public spaces.
* If you have a personal guest staying with you, and there is an additional charge for that guest, you are responsible for paying that charge. GEAR UP will not reimburse additional non-GEAR UP staff costs.
* If lodging is required that exceeds the set OFM amount then pre-approval must first be obtained by GEAR UP. For example:
	+ If a conference is held at a hotel that charges over per diem, the costs may be reimbursed to the district only if pre-approval is given. This may be allowed when the cost of staying at a separate venue requires additional transportation expenses that would result in higher costs than staying at the conference venue. If approval is given, the traveler must select the most economical room available under the circumstances.
	+ Under no circumstances will approval be given for lodging that exceeds 150% of per diem.
	+ A detailed invoice is required for all lodging expenses. The invoice must show the cost of the room, as well as the taxes and fees. A hotel confirmation is not an acceptable form of backup documentation.

## Parking

* If parking at a hotel for an event, parking included on the lodging receipt will be reimbursed.
* GEAR UP will reimburse for other offsite parking and a detailed parking receipt is required.
* GEAR UP will not reimburse for valet parking. If you opt to use valet parking, only the standard rate will be reimbursed. However, if self-parking is not an available option at the hotel, valet parking will be reimbursed.
* If a GEAR UP rate is available, parking will only be reimbursed up to that amount.

## Airfare

Staff may travel by air (economy class) and a detailed receipt showing all costs is required for reimbursement from GEAR UP. GEAR UP recommends booking directly with the airline rather than using a travel agency/service. If you book online, a copy of the actual invoice or receipt must be provided. Airline confirmations are not considered acceptable forms of backup documentation.

* **Baggage Fees:** GEAR UP will reimburse for up to one checked bag each way. A detailed receipt showing the expense is required.
* **Unallowable Costs:**
	+ Charges for changing a flight reservation.
	+ Early check-in fees.
	+ Flight insurance.
	+ Convenience fees.
	+ First class or other upgrades.

## Advance Travel

* GEAR UP cannot reimburse for advance travel. Travel expenses will only be reimbursed once the travel is completed.
* GEAR UP cannot reimburse a school district more than what a school district reimbursed the employee for nor can GEAR UP reimburse more than what the amount of the receipt reflects. Only completed travel expense vouchers with proper backup documentation will be reimbursed.

# Travel Expense Voucher and Documenting Travel

* GEAR UP requires school district travel expense vouchers with receipts as backup documentation. If your district does not have a travel expense voucher form, you may use the GEAR UP’s Travel Expense Voucher at <http://www.gearup.wa.gov/file/gear-travel-expense-voucher>.
* The travel expense voucher must include the purpose of the trip, the location, dates of travel, and departure and return times.
* **Departure and return times must be provided on the travel expense voucher even if the school district form does not require them.** Departure and return times may be included on the Expenditure Detail Form instead of the travel expense voucher.
* The following items must also be included, if reimbursement for the item is requested:
* **Mileage:** How many miles and how much per mile are being claimed from destination to destination?
* **Meals:** How much is being claimed for each meal (breakfast, lunch and dinner) on each travel day(s)?
* **Lodging:** How much for each night is being claimed for lodging? Detailed receipt is required.
* **Miscellaneous Expenses (Tolls, parking, and baggage etc.):** Detailed receipts are required.
* Provide copies of all detailed receipts/invoices for travel expenses being requested for reimbursement.
* Summary credit card receipts that do not detail what was purchased and statements or bank statements are not acceptable forms of backup documentation.
* Travel expense vouchers must include the employee’s signature, as well as a school district approval signature. Travel expense vouchers that do not reflect both signatures will be considered incomplete and will not be processed for reimbursement. Electronic or stamped signatures by either party are not allowable.
* The transaction recap report showing the reimbursement is required. It must show who was paid, and the amount paid. The transaction recap report must reflect a check date and a check number in order for GEAR UP to reimburse the expense.

# Out of State Travel

* Out of state travel is rarely approved by GEAR UP. The exceptions to this are the GEAR UP-NCCEP national conferences, AVID Summer Institute and GEAR UP West.
* Travel to Oregon and Idaho may be allowable, if the trips are approved by WSAC and in your work plan and budget.
* When planning out of state travel, it is important to understand the difference between GSA (federal) and OFM (state) per diem rates for meals. Federal GSA per diem rates are available at <https://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877>.
* When traveling out of state, look up the federal rate of your destination. Next, take the daily per diem rate for the destination and translate it to the OFM rate per meal, as listed on the state per diem map which can be found at <https://www.ofm.wa.gov/accounting/administrative-accounting-resources/travel>.
* For example: The GSA per diem meal rate for San Francisco, California is $74 per day.

**Question:** How much will I receive per meal in San Francisco, California?

**Answer:** The OFM per diem map shows that the daily per diem is $74. Therefore, staff members would receive $19 for breakfast, $22 for lunch and $33 for dinner.

## Questions

If you have questions about the reimbursement process, please contact Buffy Hatcher, [buffyh@wsac.wa.gov](file:///%5C%5CVader%5CAgencyFiles%5CGEARUP%5CGrant%20IV%5CCoordinator%20Manual%5C3%29%20Expenditures%20%26%20Reimbursements%5CWord%20Documents%5Cbuffyh%40wsac.wa.gov%20) or (360) 753-7789.