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**Lansing Housing Commission**  
**Policy No. 2009-12**  
**Travel Policy**

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**Policy Statement**

This policy applies to the travel of all officers, employees, LHC Board of Commissioners (“Board”), persons traveling for job interviews, consultants and all other persons who travel on approved, official LHC business (“Traveler”). This policy is intended to:

- Provide a clear and consistent statement of the LHC’s Travel Policy;
- Ensure compliance with applicable federal regulations; and
- Explain requirements that promote the reasonableness of costs incurred by the LHC travel expense.

All official travel should be prudently planned so that the best interests of the LHC are served at the most reasonable cost. Anyone traveling on LHC business is expected to exercise the same economy that a practical person would exercise when traveling on personal business. Excessive costs or unjustifiable cost are not acceptable and will not be reimbursed.

The provisions of this policy must be applied consistently to all travel expenses incurred by travelers.

Authorization for travel will not be granted and expenses will not be reimbursed unless travel is made and reimbursement claimed in accordance with this policy and any approved exceptions hereto. Additional restrictions may apply to travel expenses funded by non-LHC resources such as grant funds and third-party resources.

The LHC’s travel expense reimbursement program meets the Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”) definition of an accountable plan. As a result, expenses and reimbursements that conform to this policy are not reported as taxable income to the traveler.

Reimbursement rates shall be issued by the Finance Office as an addendum to this policy.

### **Authorization for Travel**

The Executive Director or a designee with appropriate decision-making authority must approve all forms related to travel. The Board Chair or Vice-Chair shall have authority to approve travel by Board members. The authorized approver s responsible for verifying the following:

- Business purpose of the travel is valid and directly related to official LHC business;
- Total cost of the trip is within the approved budget; and
- Expenses are charged to the proper accounts.

### **Non-Reimbursable Expenses**

The following are not reimbursable under this policy:

- Personal grooming services, such as barbers, hairdressers and shoe shines;
- Car rental insurance purchased for domestic travel;
- Childcare
- Corporate or personal card delinquency fees or finance charges;
- Dues in private clubs;
- Frequent flier and other similar awards for hotel and car rentals;
- Gym and recreational fees, including massages ad saunas;
- In-room movies
- Insurance costs such as life insurance, flight insurance, personal automobile insurance and baggage insurance;
- Lost baggage
- Loss or theft of cash advance money, airline tickets, personal funds or property;
- “No show” charges for hotel and car service unless there are extenuating circumstances, i.e. extreme weather, etc.
- Parking tickets or traffic violations;
- Personal automobile repairs;
- Personal credit card annual fees;
- Personal telephone charges l excess of reasonable calls home, generally ne per day; (if employee has a LHC assigned cell phone);
- Pet care; and
- Travel upgrades (air, hotel, car, etc.)

### **Exceptions**

The LHC Executive Director has sole authority to approve exceptions to provisions of this policy. Approved exceptions must be to address a reasonable accommodation or explicitly justified as beneficial to both the LHC and the Traveler and generally require the recommendation of the Traveler’s Supervisor.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Travelers**

Travelers should spend LHC funds prudently. Business travel expenses will be paid by the LHC only if they are reasonable, necessary, and in accordance with this policy. Travelers who incur business travel expenses should neither gain nor lose personal funds as a result of the travel.

Travelers who receive travel advances are responsible for submitting an Expense Reimbursement Form that details all travel expenses incurred during the trip within ten (10) days of returning from the approved travel. Travel expenses, which are unrelated to a travel advance, must be submitted utilizing an Expense Reimbursement Form no later than thirty (30) days after incurring the expense. The Traveler may delegate responsibility for preparation of the forms but will always be personally accountable for travel expense. Travelers preparing expense reports have the responsibility for applying the correct account to each receipt to ensure compliance with LHC and/or sponsor requirements.

For business travel, the use of per-diem rates (no receipts required) for daily meal costs is preferred. Per diem rates include tips and are based on the applicable Federal GSA ([www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)) schedule. Prior approval of LHC's Executive Director is required if actual daily meal costs will be used in lieu of per-diem rates. If this approval is granted, receipts will be required for daily meal costs in excess of the current average meal per-diem rates for business travel. Meals will only be reimbursed for business travel that lasts at least 12-hours during the day and if travel is 50 miles or more, each way from the office.

Receipts for lodging expenses, unless using LHC per-diem rates, are always required. All other business travel expenses require dated receipts.

## **Expense Advances**

The LHC will issue cash advances for approved pre-planned travel. The advance will be issued no earlier than one (1) week before the Traveler's departure date. Advances should be requested at least thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled trip. Before submitting a travel advance request, the Traveler must complete the Travel Advance Request Form and receive verbal approval from the Executive Director to attend the event. (See instruction for the Travel Advances and Expense reimbursement Form). Advances must be reconciled within thirty (30) days of travel.

## **Conferences**

**Registration Fees:** Registration fees for approved conferences, conventions, seminars, meetings, etc., will be approved and paid in advance, including cost of official banquets and/or luncheons, if authorized in advance by the Department Director. These fees can also be reimbursed after the fact if receipts are submitted with the Expense Reimbursement Form.

### **Corporate Credit Card**

A Corporate Credit Card is available (in Finance) to pay for LHC's travel needs including events requiring immediate payment and for travel reservations and hotel confirmations. Corporate Credit Cards users must always obtain approval from the Executive Director before use of the credit card. The general guidelines for use of a Corporate Credit card for travel are:

- The Supervisor will contact the Finance Corporate Credit Card holder when needed; Finance will initiate the charge, and the Traveler will simultaneously complete a Charge Card Expense Report form.
- A separate Charge Card Expense Report must be completed *for every charged item*, and it must be signed by the Executive Director and submitted to accounting within one week of usage. All original receipts (make copies to attach with Travel Reports) should be attached to the Charge Card Expense Report. These forms will authorize LHC to pay the credit card bill when received, and it will provide appropriate documentation and account coding for the files.

Refer to the Standard Operating Procedure for the Corporate Credit Card to obtain more information.

### **Grant & Third-Party Sponsored Travel**

All travel costs charged to grants and third-party providers must be reasonable and in accordance with policies established by the LHC, the sponsor and the terms of the specific award. Travel policies of federal and non-federal sponsors may vary.

Before making any arrangements for travel that will be funded by a grant sponsor or other non-LHC source, Travelers should consult the terms and conditions of the specific award or program. If questions remain, they should be addressed to the grant provider or third-party program sponsor.

### **Lodging, Meals and Other Expenses**

Some grant-funded projects or third-party sponsored programs set forth per-diem rates for lodging, meals and other business travel expenses. LHC Travelers should follow grant and third-party program travel policies, where appropriate. Supervisors should review the terms of the award or consult with the grant and third-party provider's office before charging travel expenses to the award.

Expenses for alcoholic beverages and entertainment such as theater productions, sporting or attending other social events with grant personnel cannot be charged to a federal grant or contract and must be coded as an unallowable expense. Such expenses are only allowable on non-federal programs when the event has been specifically approved in advance by the program sponsor.

## **Modes of Transportation**

This section contains information on reimbursable transportation expenses.

### **Domestic Travel**

Domestic travel is any travel within and between any of the 50 states of the United States and its possessions and territories.

### **Foreign Travel**

Foreign travel is expressly prohibited unless funded by non-LHC resources.

### **Transportation Tickets**

Passenger copies of transportation tickets are required when each expense is \$25.00 or greater. For electronic tickets, obtain proof of payment from the travel agent or obtain a passenger coupon at the ticket counter.

Transportation receipts must include dates, destinations and amounts.

### **Air Travel**

All air travel must be purchased by the LHC utilizing the corporate credit card, unless otherwise approved by the LHC Executive Director. With the Executive Director's approval, Travelers must purchase the lowest-priced tickets available using a commercial discount airfare or a coach or equivalent airfare. (Refer to Credit Card Policy) for additional information.

Exceptions may be allowed if the lowest-priced fare would:

- Require circuitous routing;
- Require travel during unreasonable hours;
- Excessive prolonged travel;
- Greatly increase the duration of the flight;
- Result in increased costs that would offset transportation savings; or
- Be inadequate for the medical needs of the Traveler.

The LHC Executive Director must approve justification for any of these exceptions in advance and be provided documentation on the expense report. In the unusual event that the Executive Director approves business-class or first-class travel based on factors other than, those listed above, the difference between the actual airfare and the lowest-priced fare must be coded as an unallowable expense unless authorized by the LHC Executive Director.

Travelers should make reservations as soon as travel plans are finalized to obtain advance purchase discounts. When convenient, Travelers should consider staying over a Saturday night, which could result in airfare savings of more than 40%. The LHC will reimburse Travelers for additional meals and lodging associated with a longer stay if such costs are less than the airfare costs associated with an earlier arrival or later departure.

When Travelers have multiple airports within a reasonable proximity to their home or office, i.e. up to an hour of incremental additional driving time, the purchase of air travel is expected to be from the carrier and airport that provides the most cost effective choice for travel.

### **Upgrades**

An upgrade at the expense of the LHC will not be reimbursed. A free upgrade must be noted on the expense report filed for the trip to demonstrate that the LHC did not pay for the upgrade.

### **Frequent Flier Programs**

LHC Travelers may receive personal credit for frequent flier miles.

### **Reimbursement of Early Airfare Purchase**

Travelers should have their transportation paid directly by the LHC (whenever possible) utilizing the Corporate Credit Card. The Traveler must receive authorization from the Executive Director for the direct purchase of transportation. If transportation is purchased with personal funds, Travelers may be reimbursed by the LHC utilizing the Travel Advance Request and the Expense Reimbursement Form.

### **Rental Cars**

Long distance travel by rental car is discouraged, since it increases travel time and places the LHC at higher risk for liability for business travel accidents.

The LHC will reimburse the Traveler for the cost of renting a compact or standard-size car and for the automobile-related expenses if use of a rental vehicle is the most economical mode of transportation. The Executive Director can approve upgrades to full-size cars if a detailed explanation, for example number of persons, luggage accommodations, length of commute between airport and destination, accompanies the receipt.

Before renting a car, Traveler should consider shuttle services and taxis, particularly for transportation between the airport and lodging. Mileage is not reimbursable for rental cars. In these cases, the direct cost of gasoline may be reimbursed.

### **Accident Notification**

If a rented vehicle is involved in an accident, the supervisor should be notified immediately if possible, however, the accident should be reported no later than the following business day.

### **Insurance**

For the Traveler to be covered by the rental agency's basic insurance, the rental vehicle may not be driven by persons other than the renter or leave the state in which it is rented without the agency's permission.

Travelers should accept “full insurance coverage”, and include these associated insurance fees as part of their auto rental cost estimate on the Travel Advance Request.

### **Other Ground Transportation**

Reasonable parking costs, tolls and actual mileage driven (mileage will be reimbursed at the Federal GSA business mileage rate) are reimbursable when it is necessary for a Traveler to travel by personal vehicle, whether leased or owned, for business purposes. Where practical, two (2) or more persons should travel in the same vehicle when several Travelers are traveling to the same location.

Out-of-town travel may include the use of a personal car, taxi, car services, buses or other public transportation to go to and from the airport or for transfer around the area. Cities differ in the types of cost-effective transportation they may offer for transfers to and from airports or around the city. Travelers should choose the type of transportation that other similarly situated local businesspersons would use. Reasonable transfer costs will be reimbursed.

Parking at or near air or rail terminals will be reimbursed. Valet parking services or optional services such as a car wash or oil change are personal expenses and are not reimbursable, unless self-parking is not available at a particular location.

### **Private Automobiles**

The LHC encourages the use of its vehicles when Travelers travel on official business. However, LHC will pay a standard rate per mile for official LHC travel by private automobile based on the actual driving distance by the most direct route. The standard mileage allowance, defined by the IRS and maintained on the GSA Web site ([www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem)), is in lieu of all actual automobile expenses such as fuel and lubrication, towing charges, physical damages to the vehicle, repairs, replacements, tires, depreciation, insurance, etc.

In addition to the standard mileage allowance, necessary and reasonable charges for the following automobile-related expenses are allowed: tolls, ferries, parking, bridges, and tunnels. Traffic ticket and parking ticket expenses will not be reimbursed.

Reimbursement for private car expenses will not exceed the commercial airfare and ground transportation costs that would be reimbursable for the same trip.

### **Other Forms of Transportation**

For Travelers using railroads, non-local buses or other commercial vessels, the LHC will pay the cost of the lowest first-class accommodations available for the trip.

Reimbursement will not exceed the commercial airfare that would be reimbursable for the same trip.



## **Lodging**

The LHC will reimburse a Traveler for allowable lodging expenses incurred during LHC-related travel. If a Traveler is traveling to a conference/training event held at a specific hotel, the Traveler should plan to stay at the host hotel if the cost is reasonable. Hotel reservations should be made as far in advance as travel plans will allow. Unnecessary fees should be avoided by confirming cancellation and early check-out policies when booking reservations and by complying with those policies. When checking in, you should always ask if a lower, "last minute" promotional rate is available.

## **Actual Cost**

Travelers will be reimbursed for standard hotel rooms at the lowest available rate. When possible, Travelers should receive the government rate that is available in the destination city, based on the GSA schedule that is available in the destination city. Room rates should not exceed \$200.00 per night (except in major metropolitan areas or the Conference/Training room rate) unless prior written approval is received from the LHC Executive Director.

Reimbursable lodging includes the cost of a room and related taxes. Reimbursable lodging does not include payments for the use of personally owned property or lodging provided by colleagues, friend, relatives, etc. in lieu of using a hotel.

Lodging may be claimed for each night away from your home on LHC business when your expected arrival time is 7:59 a.m. or earlier and when the meeting/conference you are attending ends after 7:59 p.m. and you are more than 50 miles from your home/office location.

The LHC will reimburse Travelers for the single occupancy cost of a standard room.

## **Lodging Receipts**

Lodging receipts are required. Meals and incidentals on lodging receipts must be itemized separately. A lodging receipt must include all of the following information:

1. The name and location of the lodging establishment;
2. The dates of stay; and
3. Separate amounts for charges such as lodging, meals and telephone calls.

## **Deposits and Cancellations**

Hotels normally hold a room without prior financial commitment until approximately 6:00 p.m., local destination time, on the check-in date. In order to hold a confirmed reservation beyond that hour, the hotel will generally require an advance deposit, which is normally prepayment for one night or a guarantee by a credit card. After a deposit is submitted or a guarantee is made, the Traveler is responsible for notifying the hotel of cancellation.



The Traveler will not be reimbursed for the deposit or guarantee penalty if he/she fails to make a cancellation notification unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the Traveler, i.e. a canceled flight. Such circumstances must be documented on the expense report.

Some hotels hosting large conferences may require a prepayment irrespective of the guest's arrival time. If prepayment is required in excess of ten (10) days before the conference, the prepayment can be made directly by the LHC to the hotel through submission of a Travel Advance Request.

### **Hotel Frequent Guest Programs**

Travelers may receive personal credit for hotel frequent guest programs.

### **Telephone**

Travelers will be reimbursed for telephone, fax, and computer connection costs that are reasonable and necessary for conducting LHC business. A reasonable number of personal telephone calls, generally one (1) per day allowing Travelers to stay in contact with their families are included in the daily per diem allowance. The LHC expects Travelers with LHC-provided cell phones to use those phones for such calls. Travelers who do not possess LHC provided cell phones will be reimbursed one hotel telephone call per day.

### **Meals and Incidentals**

The LHC will reimburse a Travelers for allowable meal and incidental expenses incurred during DHC-related travel. Travelers are eligible for reimbursement when travel exceeds 12-hours in a day and is 50 miles or more away from DHC's office.

Incidental expenses include fees and tips for persons providing services, such, as food servers, hotel housekeeping, luggage handlers, telephone calls and laundry.

Meals and incidentals on lodging receipts must be itemized separately.

### **Per-diem Meal Reimbursement**

Receipts and detailed documentation are not required when requesting reimbursement of meals and incidentals using the per-diem option. The following requirements apply when using the meal and incidentals per-diem method of reimbursement.

### **Per-diem Meal Rates**

The LHC will reimburse meal and incidental expenses based on the per-diem rate for the geographic region where the expenses are incurred. The LHC's reimbursement for domestic travel is based on the per-diem rates established by the General Administration found on its website at [www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem).

### **Per-diem Meal Reductions**

On days of travel to or from the destination, per-diems should be adjusted for the Traveler's departure and return times, to exclude any meals not incurred during the time of travel using the reduction schedule below.

The LHC's meal and incidental per-diem will be reduced to account for meals furnished at no cost or nominal cost to the Traveler. If meal costs are provided in the cost of a conference, those meals (except continental breakfast) should be deducted from the per-diem rate based on the GSA value for that meal. In addition, if a Traveler returns after 5:00 p.m. on the return date, he/she is eligible to receive the full day per diem amount. If travel occurs outside of these timeframes on the first days of travel, the Traveler is only eligible to receive 75% of the per-diem amount for the geographic region. Please see the GSA Per-diem Rates for detailed amounts per city [www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem) .

### **Actual Cost Reimbursement**

The LHC generally reimburse Travelers for three (3) meals a day. On the days of travel to or from the destination, the Traveler's departure and return times as reflected above determines whether a meal reimbursement will be paid during the travel period.

The LHC will reimburse Travelers for the actual cost of meals that exceed the per-diem rate if prior written approval is obtained from the LHC Executive Director.

### **Expenses for Meals for Others**

With prior authorization from the Executive Director, Travelers may sometimes pay for meals for others. These expenses are reimbursable when the names (s) of the meal attendees are listed and the business purpose of the meal is justified. If a Traveler is using the per-diem method for his/her expenses, meals for others will be reimbursed at actual cost provided the attendee (s) name, their affiliation, the purpose of the meeting and the original receipt or detailed documentation are provided by the Traveler.

### **Meal Receipts**

Restaurant receipts, when required, must include all of the following information:

1. The name and location of the restaurant;
2. The number of people served; and
3. The date and amount of the expense.

Gratuities must be shown on the credit card receipt or restaurant receipt.

### **Receipts**

#### **Required Receipts**

Receipts for lodging are always required unless using the lodging per-diem method. All other expenses require dated, original receipts only when each expense is \$25.00 or greater. These receipts must be submitted with expense reports.

### **Other Expenses**

Expenses under \$25.00 such as taxi fares or tips do not require receipts. Receipts under \$25.00 should not be submitted with the report. However, the amounts claimed must be accurate.

### **Lost Receipts**

If a lodging or other receipt equal to or greater than \$25.00 is not issued or is lost, a detailed Travel Log for Missing Receipts approved by the Executive Director will serve as sufficient documentation of the actual cost (see Appendix A). The LHC expects that a good faith effort will be made by the Traveler to collect and retain all required receipts. A Traveler should avoid using a Travel Log for Missing Receipts unless absolutely necessary. Receipts are always the preferred form of documentation.

### **Non-Business Days**

Weekends, holidays and other necessary layover days may be counted as business days only if they fall between business travel days. If they are at the end of a Traveler's business activity and the Traveler remains at the business destination for non-business reasons, reimbursement is not allowed for the additional days. The only exception is when travel is at a lower total cost if the Traveler stays over a weekend or holiday. This case must be explicitly justified on the Conference/Training Approval.

### **Miscellaneous Expenses**

Certain miscellaneous expenses essential to the purpose of authorized travel will be reimbursed. Miscellaneous expenses include:

- Meeting Expenses: Registration (if not prepaid), costs of presentations, published proceedings, rental of meeting rooms, and other actual expenses in connection with professional meetings, conferences and seminars will be reimbursed.
- Baggage: Charges for the first piece of luggage will be reimbursed by the LHC for its Travelers. Additional baggage charges will be at the expense of the Traveler except when the Traveler is transporting LHC materials or when the extended period of travel, more than two (2) weeks, necessitates excess personal baggage.

### **Group Travel**

A group of ten (10) or more participants traveling to the same destination over the same dates from one (1) or more origin cities may qualify for group travel rates. In order to obtain group travel discounts, meeting planners should contact the LHC's preferred travel agents for assistance. Price breaks related to group travel must be credited to the same LHC business or travel expense.

### **Sharing Expenses with External Organization**

Travelers are encouraged to combine LHC travel with other businesses if travel expenses can be shared. Travelers are responsible for seeking reimbursement for expenses payable by others. If a Traveler is taking a trip payable jointly by the LHC and another entity, the LHC will reimburse its share of the actual expenses necessary for LHC business. Coach fares must be used as the basis for prorating air travel costs. When an outside organization pays for lodging or meals, the Traveler may not claim a per-diem. In no case may the reimbursement to the Traveler from all sources exceed the total expenses incurred by the Traveler.

Where travel expenses are being shared with external organizations, a duplicate copy of the receipts will suffice if the expense report justification field contains a detailed explanation of which organization is paying the balance of the expenses.

### **Combining LHC and Personal Travel**

The LHC does not pay travel expenses that are not required for official LHC business.

### **Indirect Routes**

If the traveler takes an indirect route or interrupts a direct route for other than LHC business, reimbursement for air fare will be at either the actual charge or the charge that would have been incurred by traveling the direct route or by the most economical means, whichever, is less.

### **Rental Cars**

Any personal portion of the cost of a rental car must be subtracted from the total rental bill before requesting reimbursement. The personal portion is calculated by pro-rating the cost of the rental over the number of days for personal use and the number of days for business use.

### **Insurance**

If the Traveler accepts extra insurance cost of a domestic car rental in order to be covered during the personal portion of the trip, the entire cost of the insurance coverage for the entire rental period will be a personal expense and not reimbursable.

### **Travel Expenses of Spouse and Others**

In general, the expenses of a spouse, family member or others accompanying the business Traveler are not reimbursable.

### **Hotel Rates**

When the business Traveler and others occupy a double hotel room, whose attendance does not constitute a business purpose, the LHC will reimburse at the single room rate. In all cases, only reasonable and necessary accommodations will be reimbursed.

### **Visitors Traveling to the LHC**

If a guest is visiting the LHC for business purposes and the LHC has agreed to reimburse the guest for travel expenses, the guest may request reimbursement under this policy and avoid taxable income reporting under LHC's accountable plan. Any guest, visitor or consultant requesting reimbursement but not substantiating expenses as required under this policy will be subject to taxable income reporting on IRS Form 1099 and may be subject to withholding of federal income taxes from the reimbursement.

### **Payments to Local Hotels and Transportation Services**

If a guest is visiting the LHC for business purposes, and the LHC has agreed to provide lodging and local transportation, payment for such expenses can be made directly by the LHC to a local hotel or licensed transportation service. The guest may also pay for expenses directly and submit an expense report following the provisions of this policy.