

Guidelines for Food, Per Diem, and Allowable Costs

1. Purpose and Authority

Costs associated with grant activities, including travel related expenses, may be allowable when reasonable, necessary, allocable to the grant project, adequately documented, and directly related to completing the objectives of the grant. This policy specifies when and how allowable costs, including transportation, lodging, meals, and incidental travel expenses, may be reimbursed for grants administered by CDFA's Office of Pesticide Consultation and Analysis (OPCA). All costs must be consistent with the approved grant agreement, scope of work, budget, current California Department of Human Resources ([CalHR](#)) travel reimbursement rates. CDFA reserves the right to make the final determination regarding whether a cost is allowable and reimbursable. This policy applies to grant applicants and recipients and is based on Title 3, California Code of Regulations, Division 1, Chapter 5.

2. Definitions

Allowable Cost: A cost that is necessary, reasonable, allocable, documented, and approved under the grant.

Approved Budget: The budget that has been reviewed by both parties and is in the final executed agreement.

Grant Term: The approved period when project costs may be incurred.

3. Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Allowable costs must:

- Be necessary for project implementation
- Be reasonable in amount
- Be allocable to the grant project
- Be adequately documented
- Comply with grant agreement terms and applicable state laws

Examples of allowable costs include:

- Personnel directly working on the project
- Project related travel
- Supplies used for project implementation
- Contracted services necessary for the project

Examples of unallowable costs may include:

- Costs outside the approved scope of work
- Costs incurred outside the grant term
- Unsupported or undocumented expenses
- Personal expenses unrelated to the grant project

Final determination of allowability is made by CDFA.

4. Travel Expense Policy

Travel expenses are allowable only when necessary for approved project activities and properly documented.

- Travel in California must follow current [CalHR](#) travel reimbursement rates.
- Mileage for privately owned vehicles will be reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate.
- Out-of-state travel must follow current GSA reimbursement rates unless otherwise stated.
- Foreign travel must follow applicable federal foreign per diem guidance and may require prior approval.

Supporting documentation, including receipts and mileage logs, is required.

5. Food Expense Policy

Food outside of travel reimbursement is an allowable expense as long as the following conditions and requirements are met.

- Expenses related to food are included in the approved budget.
- The food and expenses are reasonable and necessary.
- The expense must not exceed the most recent [CalHR](#)
- The proposed food/beverages should be proportional to the length and timing of the meeting/training/workshop/outreach session where they will be served.

Matching funds may be used to cover costs exceeding allowable reimbursement limits.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Applicants and recipients are responsible for ensuring that all allowable costs, including food and travel expenses, are included in the proposed project budget and budget justification at the time of application submission.

CDFA will review the reasonableness of the requested per diem expenses and events. Reasonable expenses that support successful completion of the project will be allowed.

If allowable, food or travel expenses are included in the approved grant budget, the recipient does not need more approval to spend that money on food as specified in the approved budget.

Contact Information

Questions about allowable and per diem costs should be directed to the program inbox cdfa.opca@cdfa.ca.gov.