**Administrative Support**

This section covers administrative support, including telephone service; supplies and purchasing support; photocopying, duplication, and printing services; mail and messenger service; and travel support.

**Telephones**

A joint committee headquartered with a senate, house, or other legislative office may choose to rely on existing telephone lines and equipment. Incremental costs will be absorbed by the office, as charges incurred by the committee cannot be segregated.

A committee anticipating heavy telephone use may wish to seek approval for a separate installation. Item 3 on the Joint Select Committee Budget and Staffing Form is the appropriate place to request such funding. If the joint committee is approved for a separate installation, it must be requested through Senate Support Services or House Business Operations.

Legislative offices are served by the Capitol Complex Telephone System (CCTS) for calls within the Capitol Complex and by the AT&T network for other calls in Austin and for long-distance calls. The Department of Information Resources offers CCTS hookups, provides access to local Austin telephone service, and sells and installs telephone units. Joint committees are limited to these services. Telephones or telephone services ordered directly from the private sector are not reimbursable, and no state funds may be encumbered for their use.

**Supplies and Purchasing**

A joint committee may choose to use the supplies of the member or committee office in which the committee is headquartered. To use funds from the committee budget for supplies and special purchases, joint committees must obtain the items through the Texas Legislative Council. A committee may not independently obtain supplies or services or make purchases from outside or unauthorized sources. Such expenditures are not reimbursable and will not be treated as a commitment of state funds.

TIBH Industries operates a supply store for state governmental entities. The Texas Legislative Council obtains supplies from that store and other sources and stocks routine office supplies. Stationery and business cards are printed by the council’s print shop. All other procurement occurs through special purchases.

**Routine Supplies.** To obtain paper, other routine office supplies, or recording media (CDs, etc.) for meetings, a joint committee must submit a list of the items desired to the accounting office, indicating the committee to which they are to be charged.

**Special Purchases.** To obtain an item not available through the council supply store, including special outlays such as furniture, books, and publications, a joint committee must contact the council’s senior purchaser, and the council will obtain the item as a special purchase. On delivery, the committee must complete the TLC Receiving Report included with the supply delivery and return it to the accounting office.

**Photocopying, Duplication, and Printing**

**Council Services.** The Texas Legislative Council provides copy services through copiers in the REJ Building (for staff housed in the REJ) and through house document distribution. Charges for duplicating jobs of intermediate size are assessed against the committee budget. To request a large job requiring the use of the council print shop, contact the document production division director. Materials costs for such jobs are charged against the committee budget, so a committee should contact the council’s accounting office about any job that will have a cost.

**Other Resources.** The committee also has the option to use senate or house duplicating or printing facilities. The senate or house may charge joint committees for some or all duplicating and printing services or may offer those services for free. If the senate or house charges for services, it may confer with the council’s accounting office and provide for interagency billing of charges according to a mutually agreeable schedule.

**Photocopying Library Materials.** Texas Legislative Council employees have checkout privileges at the [Legislative Reference Library](http://www.lrl.texas.gov/), [Texas State Library](https://www.tsl.texas.gov/), and [State Law Library](https://www.sll.texas.gov/). They also may apply for a courtesy borrower’s card for [The University of Texas library system](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/) through the circulation desk of the [Perry-Castañeda Library](https://www.lib.utexas.edu/pcl) ((512) 495-4300).

If materials at the Legislative Reference Library cannot be checked out, the library staff may make copies. The library will bill the cost of the copies to the committee. Senate, house, and legislative agency staff who are assisting a committee should inform the librarian if copies are for a joint committee rather than for their usual employers. Use of the coin-operated Legislative Reference Library copier is not a reimbursable expense.

If materials at the Texas State Library or State Law Library cannot be checked out, consult the reference librarian regarding duplication and fees.

**Final Committee Report.** A committee may have the final report printed by a legislative resource, such as the council print shop, Senate Publications and Printing, or House Reproduction, or by a nonlegislative resource. Item 6 on the Joint Select Committee Budget and Staffing Form, regarding printing of the final report, contains blanks to indicate whether the chair or co- chairs intend to have the report printed by the Texas Legislative Council or another source. If intending to use a nonlegislative source, a committee should contact the council’s purchasing office, which will solicit bids for competitive pricing.

**Mail and Messengers**

**Incoming Mail.** For incoming mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service, a joint committee may use the same address as the senate, the house, or a legislative agency, depending on where the committee and its staff are headquartered. A centralized address may be preferable for coordination if the staff is dispersed among several locations. A joint committee may not rent its own post office box.

**Outgoing Mail.** Outgoing postal mail should include a committee return address to establish that it is official state business and to enable the Texas Legislative Council to assess postage charges. The council is responsible for metering and sending outgoing committee mail and charging postage to the committee budget. A committee may call the council’s accounting office for pickup or may bring the mail to the REJ Building, Plaza Level.

**Interagency Mail.** State law generally prohibits use of the U.S. Postal Service for mail that can be delivered within Travis County by interagency or interoffice means ([Sections 2176.051 and 2176.052, Government Code](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/GV/htm/GV.2176.htm#2176.051)). The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts operates an interagency mail system free of cost to joint committees. It covers most state agency and University of Texas locations in Austin.

To send interagency mail, committee staff must indicate the recipient and the street or building address and mark the envelope or package “Interagency Mail” in the upper right corner. The senate mail staff pick up outgoing interagency mail from senate offices, and Texas Legislative Council delivery assistants pick up such mail from council offices. Outgoing interagency mail from house offices must be taken to the house post office.

**Messengers.** Faster service is available within the Capitol Complex, where legislative messengers make direct interoffice deliveries. Joint committee staff housed in senate or house offices served by the senate or house sergeant-at-arms use the sergeant’s messengers for interoffice mail. Committee staff housed with the Texas Legislative Council use council delivery assistant services.

**Overnight or Express Mail.** To arrange for overnight or express mail, contact the council’s accounting office. Council mail staff will fill out associated paperwork and bill the joint committee. They will need the name, street or building address, and telephone number of both the committee and the recipient. Federal Express packages can go out as late as 3:30 p.m. Overnight or express items sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be ready by 2 p.m.

The Texas Office of State-Federal Relations offers courtesy overnight pouch service to and from Washington, D.C., every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, primarily for communications with Texas congressional offices. Mail for this purpose must be delivered to Room 2.100 of the State Insurance Building by 4:30 p.m. on those days.

**Travel**

**Eligibility and Budgetary Responsibility for Travel Expense Reimbursement.** Joint committee members and staff may be eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses incurred for attending meetings or for other committee-related business. Eligibility and the source of reimbursement will depend on several criteria, including terms specified in S.C.R. 11 and in state law.

* *Senate, House, and Citizen Members Appointed by the Lieutenant Governor or Speaker.* Senate, house, and citizen members who are appointed by the lieutenant governor or speaker are eligible for reimbursement for such travel expenses from the committee’s budget with the Texas Legislative Council.
* *Salaried Staff in the Committee’s Budget.* Staff whose salaries are included in the committee’s budget are eligible for reimbursement for such travel expenses from the committee’s budget with the Texas Legislative Council.
* *Citizen Members Appointed by the Governor.* Citizen members appointed to a joint committee by the governor are eligible for travel reimbursement by the governor’s office under S.C.R. 11 and should contact the governor’s appointments office for applicable travel policies and instructions.
* *Other State Employees or Officials.* Other state employees or officials who travel with a joint committee, including council employees not included in the committee budget, are eligible for travel reimbursement by their employers under provisions of the General Appropriations Act. They are subject to the applicable senate, house, or agency travel policies that apply to other state government travel and should contact their employing agency or entity for information on those policies and procedures.
* *Members of Subcommittees or Advisory Panels.* Reimbursement will depend on several criteria:
  + Citizen members of any subcommittees or advisory panels appointed by the chair or co-chairs, if they are also members of the full committee, are entitled to reimbursement for associated travel from the committee’s budget with the council or the governor’s office, as applicable.
  + Citizen members of subcommittees or advisory panels, if not also members of the full committee, are ineligible for travel reimbursement.
  + Legislators serving on subcommittees or advisory panels are entitled to travel reimbursement from the senate or house of representatives, as applicable, regardless of their membership on the full committee. The committee reimburses the senate or house for this expense if the approved committee budget includes funds for this purpose.
* *Subpoenaed Witnesses.* Witnesses subpoenaed by the committee are entitled to travel reimbursement from the committee budget with the Texas Legislative Council. Reimbursement is at the same rates and under the same policies and procedures as council employees.

**Advance Approval of Travel.** Whether advance approval of travel expenses is required for reimbursement will depend on the status of the individual seeking reimbursement and the nature of the expense.

* *Legislators and Citizen Members.* Neither legislators nor citizen-member appointees of the lieutenant governor or speaker normally require chair, co-chair, or Texas Legislative Council advance approval for travel associated with a committee meeting.
* *Salaried Staff.* Travel by salaried staff in the committee’s budget always requires advance approval.
* *Rental Car or Travel Outside Texas.* Advance approval is required for travel involving a rental car or travel outside Texas.
* *Travel Unassociated with a Full Committee Meeting.* Advance approval is required for travel unassociated with a committee meeting (e.g., conference attendance or separate subcommittee or advisory panel meetings) unless the chair or co-chairs waive this requirement by written notice to the council’s accounting office.

The council Advance Travel/Registration Request Form requires an estimate of transportation costs and any conference registration fees. The prospective traveler must forward to the council’s accounting office a completed form signed by the committee chair, a co-chair, or an individual designated for expenditure approval. For council employees loaned to the committee or asked to travel to assist the committee, the appropriate division director’s signature substitutes for that of the committee designee. Executive director approval is required for council funds, rather than committee funds, to cover council employee travel on committee business. The completed and signed form may be delivered to the council’s accounting office in the REJ Building or mailed to the Texas Legislative Council, Accounting Office, P.O. Box 12128, Austin, Texas 78711-2128.

**Reservations, Discounts, and Direct Billing.**

* Senate members traveling on joint committee business may make reservations, obtain discounts, and use their corporate travel cards in the same manner as for other legislative travel.
* House members traveling on joint committee business should follow the same reservation and direct billing procedures as are applicable to other house member travel.
* Citizen members of joint committees should consult with the council’s accounting department regarding state law imposing limitations on reimbursements before making reservations.
* Staff on the council payroll traveling on joint committee business can schedule airline reservations, rental car reservations, and hotel lodging reservations through the state’s contracted travel agency. Use of this travel agency gives the council access to cheaper airfares, discount car rental rates, and state government hotel rates and enables it to directly bill some of the costs (airfare and car rental) to the council rather than having the employee pay out of pocket. The council has discount and direct billing car rental arrangements with Enterprise. For information on hotels offering state government rates or for assistance, contact the council’s accounting office. When making an airline reservation for an employee, the travel agency will bill the council directly for the airfare. Rental car costs can be directly billed to the council as well. Hotel costs are not billed directly to the council but are paid by the employee and reimbursed. Information on hotel discounts and direct billing is available from the council accounting office.

**Allowable Reimbursements.** This section should be read carefully before committee members and staff make reservations or incur travel expenses. Table 1 summarizes miscellaneous travel expenses that are reimbursable. The table also indicates which receipts and expense itemizations are necessary for repayment purposes. Travel expense and reimbursement questions should be directed to the council’s accounting office.

*Transportation Expenses.* Reimbursement for transportation expenses relating to committee travel is based on S.C.R. 11, if applicable, and the General Appropriations Act enacted by the 85th Legislature. Each fiscal year, the comptroller’s office publishes travel reimbursement rates on its website.

In addition to automobile mileage rates for legislators and state employees, rates for personally owned or leased aircraft are listed. Travel by commercial airline is reimbursable at cost, with the restriction that the traveler must fly at the lowest available coach airfare unless only first class is available. Travel by rental car, taxi, shuttle, or mass transit is also reimbursable at cost.

*Meals and Lodging Expenses.* Legislators and citizen members traveling on joint committee business are reimbursed for meals and lodging at rates established by Senate Administration and House Administration, consistent with the General Appropriations Act. Meal reimbursements apply only when an overnight stay is required.

**Nonreimbursable Food and Beverage Expenses.** An attorney general’s opinion rules out payment from state funds for coffee or refreshments consumed by members or staff during a committee meeting ([Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. C-557 (1965)](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/opinions/opinions/43carr/op/1965/pdf/wc0557.pdf)). The General Appropriations Act expressly prohibits the expenditure of state funds for alcoholic beverages, and tips are not reimbursable. Tips and charges for alcohol consequently must be subtracted from one’s tab when calculating meal expenses.

**Prohibition Against Group Billing and Reimbursement for Meals.** Restrictions under the General Appropriations Act prohibit group billing and reimbursement for group meals held in conjunction with committee meetings. Participants in group dinners, lunches, or breakfasts must be billed individually to obtain state reimbursement. Restaurants or caterers should be advised of this policy if a group meal is arranged or scheduled.

**Obtaining Reimbursement.** Joint committee travelers should use receipts and expense itemizations to fill out travel expense forms for reimbursement.

* Employees on the council payroll use the council Employee Travel Expense Information Sheet, available from the council’s accounting office.
* Citizen members use the Committee Travel Expense Information Sheet, available from the council’s accounting office. Citizen members should include in the blank space on the back of the form a description of duties performed or meetings attended, giving dates and locations.
* Senate and house members should follow the travel procedures of their respective chambers. If funds for that purpose are available in the committee budget, the council will reimburse the chamber through an interagency payment voucher.

The claimant’s social security number is required on the form; it is essential for processing reimbursement. All original receipts must be attached, as summarized in Table 1. The form must include the signature of the committee chair, co-chair, or individual designated for expenditure approval. The completed form may be delivered to the council’s accounting office or mailed to the Texas Legislative Council, Accounting Office, P.O. Box 12128, Austin, Texas 78711-2128.

From the information provided by the claimant, the accounting office fills out a travel voucher and sends it to the claimant for verification and signature. The claimant returns the signed voucher to the accounting office for processing.

**Special Outlays**

**Meeting Sites Outside Austin.** A committee is advised to solicit assistance from local legislators or to obtain from the senate committee coordinator a list of preferred meeting sites that accommodate sound system, recording, and other needs of committee meetings without cost to the committee. When necessary to meet sound system needs and comply with audio recording requirements, a committee may, if funds are available in its budget, rent a meeting site. See the Committee Proceedings section for more information on the requirements for Electronic Reporting. Item 9 on the Joint Select Committee Budget and Staffing Form provides a space for requesting special outlays for this purpose. The chair or co-chairs may pay the rental expense and submit a receipt with the travel voucher or may initiate council prepayment of the expense by contacting the council’s accounting office.

**Other**. Contact the council accounting office for information about other special outlays, such as furniture, equipment, and books. See the Supplies and Purchasing, Special Purchases, portion of this section for more information about obtaining such outlays.