

## ***LEA 566***

### ***Determining Allowability of Costs Procedures***

Expenditures must be aligned with approved budgeted items. Any changes or variations from the state-approved budget and grant application need prior approval from the state.

When determining how the LEA will spend its grant funds, the LEA staff will review the proposed cost to determine whether it is an allowable use of federal grant funds *before* obligating and spending those funds on the proposed good or service. All costs supported by federal education funds must meet the standards outlined in EDGAR, 2 CFR Part 3474 and 2 CFR Part 200, which are provided in the bulleted list below. The following factors must be considered when making an allowability determination specific to each program.

#### ***Necessary and Reasonable***

All costs must Be Necessary and Reasonable for the performance of the federal award. The department staff must consider these elements when determining the reasonableness of a cost. A cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision to incur the cost was made. For example, reasonable means that sound business practices were followed, and purchases were comparable to market prices.

When determining reasonableness of a cost, consideration must be given to:

- Whether the cost is a type generally recognized as ordinary and necessary for the operation of the SDE or the proper and efficient performance of the federal award.
- The restraints or requirements imposed by factors, such as: sound business practices; arm's-length bargaining; federal, state, and other laws and regulations; and terms and conditions of the federal award.
- Market prices for comparable goods or services for the geographic area.
- Whether the individuals concerned acted with prudence in the circumstances considering their responsibilities to the SDE, its employees, its students, the public at large, and the federal government.
- Whether the LEA significantly deviates from its established practices and policies regarding the incurrence of costs, which may unjustifiably increase the federal award's cost. 2 C.F.R. §200.404.

While 2 C.F.R. §200.404 does not provide specific descriptions of what satisfies the “necessary” element beyond its inclusion in the reasonableness analysis above, necessary is determined based on the needs of the program. Specifically, the expenditure must be necessary to achieve an important program objective.

When determining whether a cost is necessary, consideration may be given to:

- Whether the cost is needed for the proper and efficient performance of the grant program.
- Whether the cost is identified in the approved budget or application.
- Whether there is an educational benefit associated with the cost.
- Whether the cost aligns with identified needs based on results and findings from a needs assessment.
- Whether the cost addresses program goals and objectives and is based on program data.

### ***Allocable to the federal award***

All costs must be Allocable to the federal award. A cost is allocable to the federal award if the goods or services involved are chargeable or assignable to the federal award in accordance with the relative benefit received. This means that the federal grant program derived a benefit in proportion to the funds charged to the program. 2 C.F.R. §200.405. For example, if 50% of an employee’s salary is paid with grant funds, then that employee must spend at least 50% of his or her time on the grant program.

### ***Consistent with policies and procedures***

All costs must be consistent with policies and procedures that apply uniformly to both federally-financed and other activities of the SDE.

- Conform to any limitations or exclusions set forth as cost principles in Part 200 or in the terms and conditions of the federal award.
- Consistent treatment. A cost cannot be assigned to a federal award as a direct cost if any other cost incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances has been assigned as an indirect cost under another award.

### ***Adequately documented***

All costs must be adequately and properly documented. All costs must be determined in accordance with general accepted accounting principles (GAAP), unless provided otherwise in Part 200.

### ***Not included as a match or cost-share***

Costs cannot be included as a match or cost-share, unless the specific federal program authorizes federal costs to be treated as such. Some federal program statutes require the non-federal entity to contribute a certain amount of non-federal resources to be eligible for the federal program.

### ***Be the net of all applicable credits***

The term “applicable credits” refers to those receipts or reduction of expenditures that operate to offset or reduce expense items allocable to the federal award. Typical examples of such transactions are: purchase discounts; rebates or allowances; recoveries or indemnities on losses;

and adjustments of overpayments or erroneous charges. To the extent that such credits accruing to or received by the state relate to the federal award, they shall be credited to the federal award, either as a cost reduction or a cash refund, as appropriate. 2 C.F.R. §200.406.

### ***Frequent Types of Costs***

*Travel:* Travel costs are the expenses for transportation, lodging, subsistence, and related items incurred by employees who are in travel status on official business of a grant recipient. Such costs may be charged on an actual cost basis, on a per diem or mileage basis in lieu of actual costs incurred, or on a combination of the two, provided the method used is applied to an entire trip and not selected days of the trip, and results in charges consistent with those normally allowed in like circumstances in the recipient's non-federally funded activities and in accordance with the recipient's written travel reimbursement policies. 2 C.F.R §200.474(a).

The costs must be consistent with the State or LEA's established policy. 2 C.F.R §200.474(b).

The State Department of Education adheres to the State Travel Policies and Procedures as approved by the State Board of Examiners. Reference link

<http://www.sco.idaho.gov/web/sbe/sbeweb.nsf/pages/trvlpolicy.htm>

Idaho State Department of Education Accounting Handbook

[http://www.sde.idaho.gov/employee\\_web/doc/travel\\_pcard/Accounting-Handbook.pdf](http://www.sde.idaho.gov/employee_web/doc/travel_pcard/Accounting-Handbook.pdf)

### ***Selected Items of Cost***

Part 200 examines the allowability of 55 specific cost items (commonly referred to as Selected Items of Cost) at 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.420-200.475. These cost items are listed in the chart below along with the citation where it is discussed whether the item is allowable. Please do not assume that an item is allowable because it is specifically listed in the regulation as it may be unallowable despite its inclusion in the selected items of cost section. The expenditure may be unallowable for a number of reasons, including: the express language of the regulation states the item is unallowable; the terms and conditions of the grant deem the item unallowable; or State/local restrictions dictate that the item is unallowable. The item may also be unallowable because it does not meet one of the cost principles. For example, the item is applicable to the grant, but the price is too expensive, which would make the purchase unreasonable, which automatically makes it unallowable. If an item is unallowable for any of these reasons, federal funds cannot be used to purchase it.

LEA personnel responsible for spending federal grant funds and for determining allowability must be familiar with the Part 200 selected items of cost section. The LEA must follow these rules when charging these specific expenditures to a federal grant. When applicable, LEA staff must check costs against the selected items of cost requirements to ensure the cost is allowable. In addition, State, LEA and program-specific rules may deem a cost as unallowable and LEA personnel must follow those non-federal rules as well.

The selected item of cost addressed in Part 200 includes the following (in alphabetical order):

<b>Item of Cost</b>	<b>Citation of Allowability Rule</b>
Advertising and public relations costs	2 CFR § 200.421
Advisory councils	2 CFR § 200.422
Alcoholic beverages	2 CFR § 200.423
Alumni/ae activities	2 CFR § 200.424
Audit services	2 CFR § 200.425
Bad debts	2 CFR § 200.426
Bonding costs	2 CFR § 200.427
Collection of improper payments	2 CFR § 200.428
Commencement and convocation costs	2 CFR § 200.429
Compensation – personal services	2 CFR § 200.430
Compensation – fringe benefits	2 CFR § 200.431
Conferences	2 CFR § 200.432
Contingency provisions	2 CFR § 200.433
Contributions and donations	2 CFR § 200.434
Defense and prosecution of criminal and civil proceedings, claims, appeals and patent infringements	2 CFR § 200.435
Depreciation	2 CFR § 200.436
Employee health and welfare costs	2 CFR § 200.437
Entertainment costs	2 CFR § 200.438
Equipment and other capital expenditures	2 CFR § 200.439
Exchange rates	2 CFR § 200.440
Fines, penalties, damages and other settlements	2 CFR § 200.441
Fund raising and investment management costs	2 CFR § 200.442
Gains and losses on disposition of depreciable assets	2 CFR § 200.443
General costs of government	2 CFR § 200.444
Goods and services for personal use	2 CFR § 200.445
Idle facilities and idle capacity	2 CFR § 200.446
Insurance and indemnification	2 CFR § 200.447
Intellectual property	2 CFR § 200.448
Interest	2 CFR § 200.449
Lobbying	2 CFR § 200.450
Losses on other awards or contracts	2 CFR § 200.451
Maintenance and repair costs	2 CFR § 200.452
Materials and supplies costs, including costs of computing devices	2 CFR § 200.453
Memberships, subscriptions, and professional activity costs	2 CFR § 200.454
Organization costs	2 CFR § 200.455
Participant support costs	2 CFR § 200.456
Plant and security costs	2 CFR § 200.457
Pre-award costs	2 CFR § 200.458
Professional services costs	2 CFR § 200.459
Proposal costs	2 CFR § 200.460
Publication and printing costs	2 CFR § 200.461
Rearrangement and reconversion costs	2 CFR § 200.462

Recruiting costs	2 CFR § 200.463
Relocation costs of employees	2 CFR § 200.464
Rental costs of real property and equipment	2 CFR § 200.465
Scholarships and student aid costs	2 CFR § 200.466
Selling and marketing costs	2 CFR § 200.467
Specialized service facilities	2 CFR § 200.468
Student activity costs	2 CFR § 200.469
Taxes (including Value Added Tax)	2 CFR § 200.470
Termination costs	2 CFR § 200.471
Training and education costs	2 CFR § 200.472
Transportation costs	2 CFR § 200.473
Travel costs	2 CFR § 200.474
Trustees	2 CFR § 200.475

In order for a cost to be allowable, the expenditure must also be allowable under the applicable program statute (e.g., Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B and Preschool along with accompanying program regulations, non-regulatory guidance and grant award notifications.

As a practical matter, the LEA staff should also consider whether the proposed cost is consistent with the underlying needs of the program. For example, program funds must benefit the appropriate population of students for which they are allocated. This means, for instance, that funds allocated under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) governing language instruction programs for English Learners must only be spent on EL students and cannot be used to benefit non-EL students.

Also, funds should be targeted to address areas of weakness, as necessary. To make this determination, the LEA staff should review data when making purchases to ensure that federal funds meet these areas of concern.

### ***State Department of Education Resources***

IDEA part B

<http://www.sde.idaho.gov/sped/funding/>

Title I-A Allowable vs Unallowable (Fiscal compliance tab):

<http://www.sde.idaho.gov/federal-programs/funding/index.html>

Title II-A Allowable Activities

<http://www.sde.idaho.gov/federal-programs/teacher/index.html>

Title I-C Non-Regulatory Guidance

<http://www.sde.idaho.gov/el-migrant/migrant/files/general/Title-I-C-Non-Regulatory-Guidance.pdf>

Title III-Program Guidance

<http://www.sde.idaho.gov/el-migrant/el/index.html>

## *Helpful Questions for Determining Whether a Cost is Allowable*

This section provides additional helpful questions to ask when determining whether a cost is allowable. Sample language is provided below and should be modified based on the needs and practices of the LEA.

In addition to the cost principles and standards described above, the LEA staff can refer to this section for a useful framework when performing an allowability analysis. In order to determine the allowability of the purchase, it is helpful to ask the following questions:

- Is the proposed cost allowable under the relevant program?
- Is the proposed cost consistent with an approved program plan and budget?
- Is the proposed cost consistent with program specific fiscal rules?
  - For example, the LEA may be required to use federal funds only to supplement the amount of funds available from nonfederal (and possibly other federal) sources.
- Is the proposed cost consistent with EDGAR?
- Is the proposed cost consistent with specific conditions imposed on the grant (if applicable)?

### Policy History:

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