

# Wayne County Regional Land Bank

## Travel and Discretionary Funds Policy

Effective 12/14/2023

**SECTION 1. PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY.** This Travel and Discretionary Funds Policy (the "Policy") shall apply to every member of the Wayne County Regional Land Bank Corporation (the "Land Bank") and all officers and employees thereof. The purpose of this Policy is to protect against the use of discretionary funds for purposes that do not advance the Land Bank's mission and purpose. This Policy is adopted in accordance with Public Authorities Law §2824(1)(b), which requires the Land Bank to adopt a policy governing travel, and the Authorities Budget Office Recommended Governance Practice encouraging all state and local authorities to adopt a policy on the proper use of discretionary funds that incorporates the legal principals set forth in Opinion No. 2007-F4 of the Office of the Attorney General.

**SECTION 2. USE OF DISCRETIONARY FUNDS.** The expenditure of Land Bank funds must relate to an enumerated power, duty or purpose of the Land Bank. Land Bank funds may not be spent in a manner that supports the private or personal interests of any member, officer or employee or benefits any member, officer or employee individually.

**SECTION 3. PRIOR APPROVAL.** Any expenditure of discretionary funds in excess of Fifty Dollars (\$500.00) and all official travel for which a reimbursement will be sought shall be approved by the Executive Director prior to such expenditure and shall fall within the Land Bank's current budget allocations. Provided, however, in the instance where the Executive Director seeks an expenditure of discretionary funds, such expenditure must be pre-authorized by the Chairman. The Executive Director or the Chairman, as the case may be, shall review the proposed expenditure and approve such expenditure only if it (i) primarily benefits the Land Bank as opposed to an individual member, officer or employee; (ii) advances a power, duty, or purpose of the Land Bank; and (iii) is reasonable and necessary.

### **SECTION 4. TRAVEL.**

- a. **Payment of Travel.** The Land Bank will reimburse all reasonable expenses related to meals, travel and lodging that were incurred by any director, officer or employee as a result of the performance of their official duties. All official travel shall be properly authorized, reported and reimbursed. Under no circumstances shall expenses for personal travel be charged to, or temporarily funded by, the Land Bank. It is the traveler's responsibility to report his or her travel expenses in a responsible and ethical manner, in accordance with this policy.
- b. **Travel Expenses.** Travelers may use their private vehicle for business purposes if it is less expensive than renting a car, taking a taxi or using alternative transportation. The traveler will be reimbursed at a standard mileage reimbursement rate as set by the Internal Revenue Service. Travelers will use due diligence to obtain the lowest cost for travel expenses.
- c. **Documentation.**

Travel Expense Voucher. A travel expense voucher reporting all expenses pertaining to a particular approved trip must be submitted to the Treasurer of the Land Bank within 45 days of the end of the trip. The travel expense voucher should include:

1. Date and time of departure from and return to the office of the Land Bank or traveler's residence;
2. Purpose of the travel or the nature of the business benefit derived as a result of the travel;
3. Whether or not the expenses incurred during the travel were pre-approved; and
4. The amount of each expenditure, listed by date and location.

Receipts. The original of the following receipts must be submitted along with the travel expense voucher:

1. All travel tickets (i.e. airline tickets, train tickets, rental car agreement);
2. All meal receipts (i.e. signed credit card slips or payment stubs); and
3. All lodging receipts (i.e. hotel, motel receipts).

Final Approval. The Treasurer shall review each travel expense voucher in order to ensure that the traveler has provided adequate substantiation and to determine whether the expenses listed therein are reasonable. The Treasurer may require a traveler to submit additional substantiation and, if the Treasurer finds a particular expense to be unreasonable (either as to amount or purpose), the Treasurer may deny reimbursement of the expense or reduce the amount of the reimbursement for such expense. In instances where the Treasurer seeks approval for his or her own travel expenses, the Chairman shall review the travel expense voucher and make the determinations set forth in Section 4.

#### **SECTION 5. APPROPRIATE EXPENDITURE GUIDANCE.**

- a. **Membership Dues.** Membership dues paid by the Land Bank to belong to a professional peer organization are generally a permissible use of Land Bank funds. However, individual membership costs for board members, officers and employees to belong to a professional, social, or fraternal organization is an impermissible use of Land Bank funds.
- b. **Charitable Contributions and Sponsorships.** The appropriateness of any sponsorship or charitable contribution will depend on whether it relates to the powers, duties and purposes of the Land Bank and whether such expenditure will advance the Land Bank's core mission and public purposes.
- c. **Food and Beverages.** With the exception of food and beverage purchases during business travel as provided in the Land Bank's Travel Policy, purchases of food and beverages for the personal consumption of members, officers or employees shall not be considered an appropriate use of Land Bank discretionary funds. However, expenditures for food and beverages purchased for or during the conduct of Land Bank meetings and conduct of business with persons that do, or may do, business with the Land Bank may be an appropriate expenditure of Land Bank discretionary funds, provided the expense is reasonable in light of the circumstances surrounding the Land Bank activity and is approved as set forth herein.
- d. **Professional Training and Conferences.** Paying the costs to attend training or professional conferences may be an appropriate expenditure of Land Bank discretionary funds, provided it is approved as set forth herein.

- e. Marketing. Paying costs incurred in the course of marketing the Land Bank's properties to potential buyers and maintaining relations with existing industries, businesses and supporting partners in furtherance of the Land Bank's mission is an appropriate expenditure of Land Bank discretionary funds, provided it is approved as set forth herein.

**SECTION 6. IMPROPER USES OF DISCRETIONARY FUNDS.** Land Bank discretionary funds shall not be used for any expense intended to personally benefit a member, employee, or officer. Examples of improper uses of discretionary funds include the following:

- a. Purchases of alcohol or tobacco products;
- b. Renewal of professional licenses for Land Bank employees;
- c. Purchases of flowers, gifts, or cards for Land Bank members, officers, or employees;
- d. Celebrations for special occasions that do not directly relate to a public purpose of the Land Bank; and
- e. Personal use of Land Bank vehicles, unless properly documented for tax purposes.
- f. Travel associated with a specific federally funded project will be billed to that grant only and reviewed to ensure that travel costs are allowable, allocable, and reasonable. Lodging will only be covered with federal funds up to the current federally accepted rate. This rate varies by location, so be sure to check <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> for the current rates. Prior to attending any grant funded travel, staff must ensure that adequate funds are in the grant budget. Travel expenses must be allocable to the grant project. Separate levels of review are required prior to authorizing advances and payments for travel.